

## 3.10 Mineral Resources

| <i>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</i>   | <i>Potentially<br/>Significant<br/>Impact</i> | <i>Less Than<br/>Significant<br/>with<br/>Mitigation<br/>Incorporation</i> | <i>Less Than<br/>Significant<br/>Impact</i> | <i>No Impact</i>         |
|---|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| <b>10. MINERAL RESOURCES—Would the project:</b>   |   |  |   |                          |
| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?                                | <input type="checkbox"/>                      | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan? | <input type="checkbox"/>                      | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>         | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 3.10.1 Environmental Setting

#### Existing Mineral Resources

The primary mineral resources in the project vicinity consist of sand, gravel, and crushed stone, which are used as sources for aggregate (road materials and other construction). The major sources for aggregate in the region are coarse-grained alluvial deposits along the San Benito River and several hard rock quarries in the Northern Gabilan Range and Southern Santa Cruz Mountains. For example, the Granite Rock Company has a quarry near Highway 101 that mines Cretaceous hornblende gabbro from the Wilson Quarry, California's largest crushed rock mine (CGS, 2005). The project area is within the Monterey Bay Production-Consumption Region, a study area designated by the California Geological Survey to establish and quantify aggregate supply and demand. According to the CGS (2006), the region has 347 million tons of permitted aggregate resources over the next 50 years, which is sufficient to supply approximately 91 percent of the anticipated demand.

In order to protect potential mineral resources in California, the California Geological Survey (formerly the Division of Mines and Geology) has classified the regional significance of mineral resources in accordance with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs), delineated by CGS, identify the presence and significance of mineral deposits within the project area. Portions of the Proposed Project would occur in an area zoned as MRZ-2: areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that a high likelihood exists for their presence (CDMG, 1987). These include the project realignment occurring at the San Benito River between proposed poles 14/14 and 15/00, as well as the existing river crossing between existing poles 14/15e through 15/12e.

#### Geothermal Resources

There are no known or potential geothermal resources identified in the vicinity of the Proposed Project.

## **Oil and Gas**

Three areas designated as potential oil fields do exist in San Benito County, near the City of Hollister, within its sphere of influence. Specifically, all three of these oil fields are located west of the city and north of State Route 156. However, only one of the oil fields is directly on the alignment path, located at the base of the Flint Hills between Poles 19/00 and 20/01 of the Hollister Pole Segment. San Benito County has issued a use permit to Lario Oil and Gas for oil and gas well exploration. The Hollister Pole Segment marks the southern boundary of the use permit area.

### **3.10.2 Regulatory Setting**

#### **State Regulations**

##### ***Surface Mining and Reclamation Act***

The primary State law concerning conservation and development of mineral resources is SMARA, as amended to date. SMARA is found in the California Public Resources Code (PRC), Division 2, Chapter 9, Sections 2710, et seq.

Depending on the region, natural resources can include geologic deposits of valuable minerals used in manufacturing processes and the production of construction materials. SMARA was enacted in 1975 to limit new development in areas with significant mineral deposits. SMARA calls for the State geologist to classify the lands within California based on mineral resource availability.

SMARA states that the extraction of minerals is essential to the continued economic well-being of the State and to the needs of society, and that reclamation of mined lands is necessary to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and to protect the public health and safety. The reclamation of mined lands will permit the continued mining of minerals and will provide for the protection and subsequent beneficial use of the mined and reclaimed land. Surface mining takes place in diverse areas where the geologic, topographic, climatic, biological, and social conditions are significantly different, and reclamation operations and the specifications therefore may vary accordingly (Pub. Res. Code Section 2711).

##### ***California Health and Safety Code***

In addition, the California Health and Safety Code requires the covering, filling, or fencing of abandoned shafts, pits and excavations (California Health and Safety Code Sections 24400-03).

#### **Local Regulations**

Local governments regulate mineral resources and mining within their jurisdictions pursuant to their General Plan and local zoning ordinances.

### **Monterey County General Plan**

The Open Space Element of the Monterey County General Plan contains the following policies relating to mineral resources:

OS-2.1: Potentially significant mineral deposits and existing mining operations identified through the State Division of Mines and Geology, including idle and reserve properties, shall be protected from on-site and off-site land uses that would be incompatible with mineral extraction activities.

OS-2.2: Mineral extraction operations shall be in keeping with sound conservation practices consistent with the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) and other applicable standards and adequate financial security shall be required to insure reclamation of the extraction site to a condition consistent with the surrounding natural landscape and environmental setting.

OS-2.3: Efforts to conserve raw mineral resources through recycling shall be supported.

OS-2.4: Lands containing known valuable mineral deposits shall be mapped in the County GIS system. Mapped information shall be updated as needed.

OS-2.5: The County shall inventory, assess, and characterize the location and condition of identified pre-SMARA abandoned gold, mercury and coal mines and implement such measures as may be necessary to ensure that such mines do not contribute to a significant risk to public health or safety or non-compliance with water quality standards and criteria.

### **Monterey County Code**

Chapter 16.04 of the Monterey County Code contains the County's Surface Mining and Reclamation Ordinance. The ordinance is adopted pursuant to the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, Chapter 9, Public Resources Code. The purpose of the ordinance is to 1) ensure adverse environmental effects are prevented or minimized and that mined lands are reclaimed to a usable condition which is readily adaptable for alternative land uses, 2) that the production and conservation of minerals are encouraged, while giving consideration to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, and aesthetic enjoyment, and 3) that residual hazards to the public health and safety are eliminated.

### **San Benito County General Plan**

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the San Benito County General Plan contains the following policies relating to mineral resources:

Policy 20: Significant mineral resources: It is the policy of the County to recognize areas classified Mineral Resource Zone 2 (MRZ-2) or Scientific Zone (SZ) pursuant to the Guidelines for Classification and Designation of Mineral Lands as mineral resources of statewide and regional significance. Strategies shall be developed to protect these mineral resources from premature development incompatible with mining.

*Actions:*

1. Implement existing "MR" zoning on selected mineral resource areas determined by the Board of Supervisors to require a special level of protection as an additional method of avoiding land use conflicts between mineral extraction and other incompatible uses with the following criteria:
  - i. Lands classified as MRZ-2 or SZ by the State of California Division of Mines and Geology qualify for the "MR" zoning designation and/or;
  - ii. Evidence of the location, extent, and depth, and quality of mineral resources shall be submitted as part of the MR overlay zoning application. The material shall be reviewed by a geologist selected by the County for accuracy.
  - iii. Deny MR overlay zoning requests that do not provide evidence of significant mineral resources on site.
2. Review the General Plan Land Use map in significant mineral resource areas to identify potential land use conflicts.
3. Allow the use of voluntary conservation easements on mineral lands and contiguous properties to protect significant resources.
4. A notice explaining the location of important mineral resources shall be recorded on any parcel within a MRZ2 or SZ designation or within one-half mile.

### ***San Benito County Code***

Chapter 19.13 of the San Benito County Code contains the County's Surface Mining Operations and Reclamation Ordinance. The ordinance is adopted pursuant to the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, Chapter 9, Public Resources Code. The purpose of the ordinance is to regulate surface mining operations so as to prevent or minimize the adverse environmental effects of surface mining; to provide for the reclamation of mined lands; to encourage the production and conservation of minerals; and to eliminate hazards to public health and safety.

## **3.10.3 Applicant Proposed Measures**

No applicant proposed measures have been identified by PG&E to reduce impacts to mineral resources associated with the Proposed Project.

## **3.10.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

### **a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.***

The only portions of the Proposed Project that would cross a known aggregate resource (areas zoned as MRZ-2) would occur along the Hollister Pole Segment within the San Benito River floodplain. This comprises proposed poles 14/14 through 15/00, where a new right-of-way would

be required; as well as existing poles 14/15e through 15/12e, which would be removed or topped. Activities relating to construction and operation of the new right-of-way temporarily could affect the availability of a known mineral resource directly, e.g., if the placement of poles or towers required localized removal of mineral resources in the limited area required for the foundation, or indirectly, e.g., if construction or maintenance needs temporarily precluded access to such mineral resources. However, the Proposed Project would not result in a substantial loss in the availability of the known mineral resources in the MRZ-2 zoned area either directly (because the work would not consume any available aggregate resource) or indirectly (e.g., by precluding access to such resources). No aggregate extraction currently is occurring, and future extraction would not be precluded, or significantly obstructed or otherwise affected by the Proposed Project.

As discussed in the setting, a portion of the Hollister pole segment crosses a known oil field at the base of the Flint Hills. The Hollister pole segment marks the southern boundary of an area that San Benito County has granted a use permit for oil and gas exploration to Lario Oil and Gas. However, the Proposed Project would not interfere with the company's ability to explore for oil resources. The new poles are to be placed in the same location as the existing poles and access to the oil field would not be hindered.

In sum, access to and availability of known mineral resources that would be of value to the region and the residents of the State would not be substantially lost as a result of the Proposed Project. The potential impact would be less than significant.

**b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan: *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.***

The County of San Benito, in addition to recognizing State-designated MRZ zones, has acknowledged the San Benito River as a locally important mineral resource. The portion of the proposed river crossing that crosses the San Benito River between Poles 14/14 and 15/00 would be within a locally important mineral resource area of San Benito County. However, the pole replacement activities that would be associated with the Proposed Project would affect only a very small area and the proposed river crossing and would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site. Therefore, the Proposed Project would result in less than significant impacts to locally important mineral resources.

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## References

County of San Benito, *Environmental Constraints and Resources Element*. Final. Adopted July 26, 1994.

County of Monterey, *Monterey County General Plan*. Final, adopted January 2007.

City of Hollister, *City of Hollister General Plan*. Final, adopted December 2005.

California Division of Mines and Geology. *Mineral Land Classification: Aggregate Materials in the San Francisco - Monterey Bay Area, Part IV: Classification of Aggregate Resource Areas: Monterey Bay Production-Consumption Region*. Special Report 146, 1987.

California Geological Survey (CGS), *Aggregate Availability in California, Fifty Year Aggregate Demand Compared with Permitted Aggregate Resources*, Map Sheet 52 (updated 2006), 2006.

California Geological Survey (CSG), *California Non-Fuel Minerals*, prepared by Susan Kohler, Senior Geologist, 2005.