

# PROPONENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – ZAYO PRINEVILLE-TO-RENO FIBER OPTIC PROJECT

## Mineral Resources

### 5.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

This section describes the existing mineral resources in the vicinity of the project and analyzes potential mineral resource impacts associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the project. The project's potential effects on mineral resources were evaluated using the significance criteria set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The analysis in Section 5.12.4, Impact Analysis, concludes that the project would have no impact on mineral resources.

#### 5.12.1 Environmental Setting

##### 5.12.1.1 Mineral Resources

Mineral resources are generally finite and occur in sporadic deposits, which often create a relative scarcity and a need to protect access to supplies. Many mineral resources are important to global, national, state, and local economies. In 2015, California had approximately 1,042 active mines responsible for approximately 4.7 percent of the United States' non-fuel mineral production (California Department of Conservation 2020). The largest component of this production was derived from sand and gravel mining. Primary mineral resources within the project area generally include diatomite, gravel, and sand. Active mining sites within the project area and aggregate material resources are discussed in further detail below.

##### Active and Historic Mines

A desktop review of the California Department of Conservation's Mines Online database was conducted for the project. There are numerous historic mines within 1 mile of the project area that have an operation status of closed, idle, or reclaimed; however, there are only four mines that are listed active. The four active mines include the following (California Department of Conservation 2016):

- Hindle Pit–Modoc, Modoc County (sand and gravel)
- Gravier Pit, Lassen County (sand and gravel)
- Viewland Properties #2, Lassen County (sand and gravel)
- Sierra Lady Placer Claims, Lassen County (diatomite)

##### Aggregate Material Resources

Aggregate materials (i.e., sand and gravel) used for construction is California's primary mineral resource. As required by the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), CGS defines several geographic areas that collectively cover a single mineral classification study area as Production-Consumption Regions (P-C Regions). The CGS identifies Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) for each P-C Region, mine/quarry, or other geographic area included in a mineral classification study. MRZs are areas classified by the presence or absence of significant sand, gravel, or stone deposits that are suitable as sources of aggregate, as described in Section 5.12.2.2, State.

Lands not addressed by the CGS, either within a P-C Region or outside a mineral classification area, are defined as "unclassified". Based on review of the California Department of Conservation CGS Mineral



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Land Classification database, there are no MRZs within or directly adjacent to the project area (California Department of Conservation 2015).

### 5.12.2 Regulatory Setting

#### 5.12.2.1 Federal

There are no federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws pertaining to mineral resources that are applicable to the project.

#### 5.12.2.2 State

##### Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

SMARA was enacted in response to land use conflicts between urban growth and essential mineral production. SMARA (PRC Section 2710 et seq., subsequently amended) is the primary regulation for onshore surface mining in the State. SMARA mandated that aggregate resources throughout the state be identified, mapped, and classified by the state geologist so that local governments could make land use decisions in light of the presence of aggregate resources and the need to preserve access to those resources. Local jurisdictions are required to enact specific plan procedures to guide mineral conservation and extraction at particular sites, and to incorporate mineral resource management policies into their general plans. The State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) has prepared Mineral Land Classification Maps for aggregate resources. The Mineral Land Classification Maps designate four different types of resource sensitivities. The four MRZ sensitivity types are described below.

- **MRZ-1:** Areas where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood for their presence exists.
- **MRZ-2:** Areas where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present or where it is judged that a high likelihood for their presence exists.
- **MRZ-3:** Areas containing mineral deposits the significance of which cannot be evaluated from available data.
- **MRZ-4:** Areas where available information is inadequate for assignment of any other MRZ zone.

#### 5.12.2.3 Local

Because the CPUC has exclusive jurisdiction over project siting, design, and construction, the project is not subject to local mineral resource regulations. However, this section identifies local mineral resources regulations, policies, and plans for informational purposes and to assist with CEQA review.

##### Modoc County General Plan

The Modoc County General Plan was adopted in September 1988 and includes the following policies related to mineral resources that are relevant to the project (Modoc County 1988, as amended):



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- **Goal:** To preserve, protect, and enhance the valuable natural, cultural, and historical resources of the County
  - **Policy 1 (Minerals):** Preserve, wherever practical, the mineral resources of the county through limitations on incompatible development on or adjacent to identified resource areas.

### Lassen County General Plan

The Lassen County General Plan was adopted in September of 1999, and although it includes a discussion and goals and policies related to mineral resources, there are no goals or policies that are directly relevant to the project, nor are there any local mineral resource areas that are of local importance within the vicinity of the project (Lassen County 1999, as amended).

### Sierra County General Plan

The Sierra County General Plan was first adopted in 1996 and includes the following goals and policies related to mineral resources that are relevant to the project (Sierra County 1996, as amended):

- **Mineral Management Goal 1:** It is the goal of the Mineral management Element to encourage, enhance, and protect mining and mining related activities in the County, consistent with the fundamental goals of the County General Plan by developing clear and concise policies that coordinate agency jurisdiction over the mineral extraction industry; that clearly establishes compatible, post-mining land uses for previously mineralized areas; and, that identifies and protects existing and potential mineralized areas.

### 5.12.3 Impact Questions

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less-than-Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less-than-Significant Impact	No Impact
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



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### 5.12.4 Impact Analysis

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#### 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?

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**No Impact.** As discussed in Section 5.12.1, Environmental Setting, the project area is not located in a designated MRZ, which is a land classification created by the CGS used to designate sites with known deposits of commercially viable mineral or aggregate materials in California. Although there are several active mines within 1 mile of the project area, the project would not result in direct impacts to these mines because construction would occur mostly within the US 395 right-of-way and along county roads. Once constructed, the new fiber optic line would be located underground, almost entirely within the US 395 right-of-way, and would not have the potential to adversely affect any of the current or future mining operations in the area. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that is of value to the region. No impact would occur.

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#### 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?

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**No Impact.** There are no locally important mineral resource recovery sites directly located within the project area. Based on review of the applicable general plans (Modoc County, Lassen County, and Sierra County General Plans), there are no locally important mineral resources that occur within the project area. Even though there are several mines that occur within 1 mile of the project area, all construction activities associated with the project would occur mostly within the US 395 right-of-way and along county roads, and would not permanently affect the operation of these mines. Once operational, the new fiber optic line would be located underground, almost entirely within the US 395 right-of-way, and would have no potential to affect any current or future mineral resource recovery sites in the area. Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. No impact would occur.

### 5.12.5 Draft Environmental Measures

There are no applicable environmental measures for mineral resources.

