
11.0 CEQA REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS

11.1 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

There are no significant unavoidable impacts associated with the Bonny Doon Limestone Quarry Boundary Expansion Project and Reclamation Plan Amendment. Potentially significant impacts of the Limestone Quarry Boundary Expansion and the 1996 Reclamation Plan Amendment are identified in Chapters 3 through 9 of this EIR along with mitigation measures that would reduce or avoid these impacts. All project impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level with mitigation.

11.2 IRREVERSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

The project involves the expansion of a mining operation onto 17.1 acres of forested terrain. Irreversible environmental changes include the change in landform from slopes covered by forest and scrub to a benched face of exposed rock. The soil substrate over the rock would be completely removed and the landscape would be permanently altered even with revegetation. Wildlife use of the Boundary Expansion Area for foraging, nesting, and denning would be greatly altered by the loss of existing habitat, although this would be restored gradually through successful reclamation. The final rock faces of the Boundary Expansion Area would provide habitat to different, and fewer, species than currently occur in the Boundary Expansion Area.

11.3 GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS

The proposed mining expansion project would not directly result in growth inducing impacts. The project does not include expansion of infrastructure or services that would enable new growth to occur in the project vicinity. Limestone from the quarry is used to make cement products used in the construction industry. The proposed project enables continued production of cement products at the CEMEX cement plant in Davenport. Although the proposed project indirectly supplies materials that may be used in regional growth, the project itself does not induce growth.

11.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Section 15130(a) of the CEQA Guidelines requires a discussion of the cumulative impacts of a project “when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable.” Cumulatively considerable, as defined in Section 15065(a)(3) “means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.”

CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 defines cumulative impact as “two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts.” The Guidelines further state that “the cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonable foreseeable probable future projects.”

One exception to the above discussion exists in CEQA. Section 15183(d) of the CEQA Guidelines makes special provisions on cumulative effects for projects that are consistent with an adopted community plan, general plan or zoning, provided certain criteria are met. In an effort to reduce the need to prepare repetitive environmental studies, CEQA mandates that projects which are consistent with the following: (a) a community plan as adopted as part of the general plan; (b) a zoning action which zoned or designated the parcel on which the project would be located to accommodate a particular density of development; or (c) a general plan of a local agency. In addition, an EIR must be certified by the lead agency for the zoning action, the community plan, or the general plan. Additional environmental review is not required for projects meeting the above conditions, except as may be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects that are peculiar to the project or its site.

Section 15183(b) of the CEQA Guidelines directs the public agency to limit its examination of environmental effects to those which the agency determines in an initial study or other analysis: (1) are peculiar to the project or parcel on which the project would be located; (2) where not analyzed as significant effects in a prior EIR on the zoning action, general plan, or community plan, with which the project is consistent; (3) are potentially significant off site impacts and cumulative impacts which were not discussed in the EIR prepared for the general plan, community plan or zoning action; or (4) were previously identified as significant and as a result of substantial new information that was not known at the time the EIR was certified, are determined to have a more severe adverse impact than discussed in the prior EIR.

Previously approved land use documents such as general plans, specific plans, and local coastal plans may be used in cumulative impact analyses. A pertinent discussion of cumulative impacts contained in one or more previously certified EIRs may be incorporated by reference pursuant to the provision for tiering and program EIRs. No further cumulative impacts analysis is required when a project is consistent with a general, specific, master or comparable programmatic plan where the lead agency determines that the regional or area-wide cumulative impacts of the proposed project have already been adequately addressed, as defined in Section 15152(f), in a certified EIR for that plan.

If a cumulative impact was adequately addressed in a prior EIR for a community plan, zoning action, or general plan, and the project is consistent with that plan or action, then an EIR for such a project should not further analyze that cumulative impact, as provided in Section 15183(j).

11.4.1 Prior EIRs Consistent with Section 15183 of the State CEQA Guidelines

On May 24, 1994 the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors certified the EIR, and adopted the County of Santa Cruz, California 1994 General Plan and Local Coastal Program (County of Santa Cruz, 1993a&b, 1994). The GP/LCP was designed to meet the specific requirements of Government Code Section 65300 et seq. as specifically stated on page 1-6 of the plan. A draft and final EIR, as required by CEQA, were prepared and adopted for the GP/LCP. The final EIR identified several significant environmental effects of the project that, even after specific mitigation, would still result in a significant impact to the environment. The EIR for the GP/LCP is hereby incorporated into this document by reference and is available at the office of the County of Santa Cruz Planning Department (County of Santa Cruz, 1993a&b).

In adopting the community plan and certifying the EIR, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors identified several significant effects and made findings and overriding considerations. Overriding findings were made for the following significant impacts:

- Increase in Number of Patrol Deputies – General Plan buildout would require an additional seven patrol deputies in order to maintain the existing level of service. Success of this mitigation is contingent upon the County to capture an adequate funding source (Impact 4.6-1)
- Inadequate Parkland in Aptos, Live Oak, Soquel and Pajaro Valley – Implementation of the Draft General Plan would increase demands for park and recreation facilities beyond existing and proposed neighborhood park acreages in Aptos, Soquel, and Pajaro Valley and community park acreages in the Aptos, Live Oak, and Pajaro Valley Planning areas. Success of this mitigation is contingent upon the County obtaining an adequate funding source (Impact 4.6-9)
- Increased Student Population in the Live Oak Elementary, Pajaro Valley Unified, Santa Cruz City, Soquel Unified Elementary, and Scotts Valley Union School Districts – Existing and planned school facilities would not be sufficient to accommodate increased student populations generated by General Plan buildout. New school facilities would be needed. Success of these mitigations are contingent upon the County obtaining an adequate funding source (Impacts 4.6-11, 4.6-12, 4.6-13, 4.6-14 and 4.6-15)
- Increased Demand on Water Supply (Pajaro Valley) – Water demand in the Pajaro Valley planning area would increase by 801 acre feet per year. The Pajaro Valley aquifer is currently in overdraft, and seawater intrusion has impacted coastal areas due to over pumping. Although a Ground Water Management Plan is under review, the implementation time line for correcting the overdraft and seawater intrusion is projected at 50 years. Additional water demand at this time could increase the existing imbalance between ground water pumping and ground water recharge (Impact 4.7-5).

In adopting overriding considerations, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors expressed that they had made reasonable and good faith efforts to mitigate potential impacts resulting from the GP/LCP. Based on comments received during the public review period, the Board adopted a revised Alternative 2 to better achieve compatible development densities in various neighborhoods and to lessen or avoid significant environmental impacts identified in the Draft EIR. Revised Alternative 2 made minor changes to dwelling unit buildout totals in the five planning areas resulting in an overall reduction of 245 dwelling units. Additionally, the Board adopted a Mitigation Monitoring Program for the GP/LCP that outlines how the mitigation measures adopted as part of the Plan are to be implemented, monitored, and evaluated. As required by Section 15093 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the Board of Supervisors found that the benefits of approving the project outweighed the unmitigated adverse environmental effects.

11.4.2 Effects of Other Local and Regional Projects

For the cumulative analysis of the proposed Bonny Doon Limestone Quarry Boundary Expansion Project and the 1996 Reclamation Plan Amendment, cumulative conditions were assumed to be those identified in the GP/LCP EIR (County of Santa Cruz, 1993). The

unincorporated portion of Santa Cruz County is divided into 15 planning areas, of which five contain land within the Urban Services Line. As a part of the 1993 Draft General Plan, it was concluded that the ten non-urban planning areas would have virtually no land use designation changes. Land use changes were, however, proposed for the portions of the five planning areas (Aptos, Carbonera, Live Oak, Pajaro Valley, and Soquel), which contain land within the Urban Services Line. The Bonny Doon Quarries are located within the Bonny Doon Planning Area, outside of the Urban Services Line. The existing vested right to mine was established in 1969 under the current use permit (#3236-U).

The County compiled a list of pending or foreseeable projects in the project vicinity. See Appendix E: Bonny Doon Planning Area Project List (May 2007). The list has 15 entries, two of which are the ongoing activity at the Quarry and the possible extension of mining to the 9.4 acres encompassing the entire remaining legal limit that is subject to vested rights.

Of the thirteen other actions in the Bonny Doon area, four are for single-family homes, the remaining actions are minor, such as additions or outbuildings, Lot Line Adjustment, permit extension, stream bank protection, etc. None of these actions would generate appreciable environmental impact or have a range of effect that might overlap with the effects of the proposed project. In addition, the new dwellings are not within the immediate area offsite that may be affected by project noise or air pollutant emissions.

11.4.3 Assessment of Cumulative Impacts

Geology and Soils. The geologic impacts of the project include slope stability of the new cut and fill slopes, stability of settlement basin levees serving the Boundary Expansion Area, and erosion. These impacts are confined to the project site. Future mining may occur in the 9.4 acres remaining within the Legal Mining Limit. Mining in this area would have similar geological impacts as the proposed project. Mitigation measures applied to the Boundary Expansion Area would also be applicable to mining the remainder area. The combined geologic impacts of the proposed project and mining in the remainder area on slope stability, levee stability, and erosion can be controlled through mitigation. There are no significant cumulatively considerable impacts associated with the project.

Hydrology and Water Quality. Cumulative impacts to hydrology and water quality impacts are described in Section 5.3.4. Except for mining in the 9.4-acre remainder area, there are no new projects in the Bonny Doon Planning Area identified by the County that would directly contribute to or overlap with water quality or quantity impacts of the quarry expansion project to downstream sections of Liddell Creek. The project could impact water quality or quantity of Liddell Spring, which is a water supply source for the City of Santa Cruz resulting in a loss of spring flow production. This loss, when combined with other possible losses to the City's water supply (see Section 5.3.4) is a significant impact. Implementation of Measures HYD-1, HYD-2, and HYD-3 would protect the quantity and quality of Liddell Spring waters from project impact and mitigate the cumulative effects of the project to a less than significant level. As a result, there are no significant cumulatively considerable impacts associated with the project.

Biology. Cumulative impacts to biological resources are described in Section 6.3.4. Mining operations at the Limestone Quarry could expand into the 9.4-acre remainder area that is

within the Legal Mining Limit. This expansion would cumulatively add to the project's impact on the San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, steelhead, coastal sage scrub and oak woodland. Mitigation measures identified in the EIR (Section 6.4) reduce the project impacts on biological resources to a less than significant level. Similar mitigation applied to the future mining in the remaining 9.4 acres would also reduce the cumulative impacts on these biological resources to a less than significant level. There are no other projects in the Bonny Doon Planning Area identified by the County that would significantly add to cumulative biological impacts of the Bonny Doon Quarries Expansion Project. As a result, there are no significant cumulatively considerable impacts associated with the project.

Air Quality. The proposed project is consistent with land use designations in the GP/LCP. In compliance with CEQA Section 15183, the cumulative air quality impacts of the project have been addressed by the EIR for the GP/LCP and do not need to be discussed further.

Noise. There are no cumulative impacts associated with noise (see Section 8.3.5). The project impacts of noise are site specific and do not combine with other projects in the Bonny Doon Planning Area to create increased offsite impacts.

Energy and Natural Resources. The cumulative loss of 17.1 acres of timberland in Santa Cruz County is less than significant (see Section 9.3.5).

11.5 EFFECTS FOUND TO BE NOT SIGNIFICANT

The County of Santa Cruz prepared an Environmental Review Initial Study for the Bonny Doon Limestone Quarry Boundary Expansion Project (Appendix A). The Initial Study concluded that the project would have less than significant or no impacts on Aesthetics, Cultural Resources, Energy and Natural Resources, Services and Utilities, Traffic/Transportation, Land Use/Housing, and Hazards.

11.5.1 Aesthetics

The project site is not visible from adopted scenic highways or corridors and would not alter or block views from scenic vistas.

11.5.2 Cultural Resources

A surface reconnaissance site survey was conducted in November 1990. No cultural resources were found in the Boundary Expansion Area.

11.5.3 Energy and Natural Resources

Mining the Boundary Expansion Area eliminates 17.1 acres of timber resources. The acreage is small relative to the amount of habitat in the surrounding area, which includes over 1,000 acres in CEMEX's management.

11.5.4 Services and Utilities

The mining project does not create new demand for public services or utilities.

11.5.5 Traffic/Transportation

Quarried materials are transported to the cement plant in Davenport by a conveyor belt. Mining the Boundary Expansion Area would not generate new traffic on local roads.

11.5.6 Land Use/Housing

The project would not displace housing or create a community demand for housing. The project does not change the land use of the surrounding area.

11.5.7 Hazards

The mining operation uses blasting agents to dislodge limestone. The blasting agents are contained in secure buildings and subject to federal regulation. The project would not alter the use of the blasting agents or handle other hazardous materials.