

## 4.13 AESTHETICS

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This section summarizes the visual analysis technical study prepared by Kawasaki Theilacker Ueno + Associates (KTU+A) in December 1998 (Appendix P). Major tasks conducted for the KTU+A study include the identification of the visual character; description of visually prominent project elements; determination of project visibility; quantification and qualification of viewer groups; preparation of special landform models; creation of visual simulations; and the determination of visual impacts. The study also documents the process and the effects of various mitigation measures and discusses alternative project design where appropriate.

### 4.13.1 EXISTING SETTING

KTU+A established existing visual conditions in and around the project area using the following steps:

- Identification of the visual character and quality of the site and subregion
- Determination of the visibility of the site within the subregion
- Quantification of the primary viewers and determination of the probable sensitivity to change of the subregion
- Synthesis of the above steps into a visual resource zone summary

The following describes the individual units starting with the regional scale, the local subregional scale, and the site-specific landscape units.

#### 4.13.1.1 Regional Visual Character

The identifiable region of the project study area is the North County Inland Mountain Region, which is generally north of Escondido and east of San Marcos (Exhibit 4.13-1). It is defined by inland hilly terrain with large valleys and canyons. The region is generally rural in nature with concentrated pockets of small communities. The area topography is dramatically different than the coastal areas of the county. Vegetative cover is generally native with a strong influence from orchard development.

#### 4.13.1.2 Subregional Visual Character

The subregion comprises the viewshed limits of the San Luis Rey River Valley. The viewshed is focused on the river bottom, with its edges defined by the upper ridgelines on either side of the river (Exhibit 4.13-1). The character of this canyon is both natural and disturbed. The natural areas are well defined by the river bottom and are characterized by riparian tree growth. Floodplain lowlands are generally grasslands and hillsides are generally native sage and chaparral.

Though this subregion is primarily natural in its appearance, significant existing disturbances are very evident. These disturbances include sand and gravel mining in the floodplain, pasture and cropland in the upland areas, and orchard development on the hillsides. In addition, development in the area includes single-family residences on the hills north of the San Luis Rey River. To the south of the site, within Couser Canyon, are rural-residential uses. This area consists of single-family residences on parcels ranging from four to 20 acres. Many of the parcels contain active agricultural orchards, consisting primarily of avocado and citrus trees.



The steep, undeveloped slopes of Gregory Mountain abut the site to the east. Visually prominent rock outcrops exist on the higher slopes of Gregory Mountain and throughout the Subregional area. Farther east are more undeveloped hills with agricultural uses along the San Luis Rey River Valley. The residential community of Pala is located about 2.5 miles northeast of Gregory Canyon. On the western portion of the site is the easement of the First San Diego Aqueduct.

#### 4.13.1.3 Landscape Unit Character and Rating Summary

##### Visual Rating Criteria

Generally, the hillside areas have both a higher visual quality based on landform and are high in sensitivity to change. The upland areas are usually intact or represent a cohesive rural character. The lowland areas are the most disturbed and are generally ranked lower than the other two topographic categories. Additionally, KTU+A staff field-rated physical properties and assigned a level of visual sensitivity, scenic quality, and visibility for each unit, which are described below.

- **Visual sensitivity** refers to the relative importance of the landscape unit as a visual or recreational resource and its capacity to absorb visual changes. Indicators of visual sensitivity include landforms, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, and cultural modifications. Each unit was categorized into one of three sensitivity categories; highly sensitive, moderately sensitive and low sensitivity (Figure 3 of Appendix P).
- **Visual quality** describes the balance achieved among various aesthetic factors, including landscape variety, texture, linearity, contrast, intactness and unity. Visual quality is most important for those units adjacent to the site, since they make up the local visual setting. Views from a landscape unit are not necessarily affected based on the visual quality of that unit, but upon the visual quality of the areas viewed from that unit. For visual quality, units may range from high (A), moderate (B), to low (C) (Figure 5 of Appendix P).
- **Visibility** is determined by the distance from which landscape features are viewed. Generally, the further the distance, the smaller the project element appears, the less definition of detail is discernible; texture and color changes are subdued by atmospheric conditions; and the portion of the cone of vision that the element occupies becomes less significant. The visual quality of a landscape (and viewer perception) may be magnified or diminished by the visibility of the landscape from major viewing routes and key viewpoints. According to the Visual Resource Management Program of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), a landscape scene can be divided into four visibility groups: foreground, middleground, background, and seldom seen. For this study, the primary location of the majority of viewers is SR 76. The foreground is defined as the area seen from the road to the riparian corridor. The middleground is defined as the area from the riparian corridor to the base of the hillside. The background is mostly considered the hillsides up to the ridgeline of Gregory Mountain. Several areas are not seen from the highway due to intervening topography or vegetation. Visibility zones on the project site are depicted on Figure 4 of Appendix P.

Quality and Sensitivity worksheets, which were established using “Scenic Quality Inventory and Sensitivity Evaluation Charts” derived from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and BLM prototypes, were used. The landscape unit sensitivity and quality ratings, as well as a brief description of each landscape unit, are summarized on Table 4.13-1. Photographs and the worksheets of the 21 landscape units are provided in Appendix P.

**TABLE 4.13-1  
LANDSCAPE UNIT CHARACTER AND RATING SUMMARY**

<b>LANDSCAPE UNIT<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>QUALITY</b>	<b>QUALITY CATEGORY<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>SENSITIVITY</b>	<b>SENSITIVITY LEVEL<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY</b>
LD1	7	C	14	M	This unit is an upland floodplain that has been disturbed by agricultural development. Typically this area is cultivated with field crops. The scenic quality rating is low and the sensitivity to change is moderate. The edges are defined by the highway and the riparian corridor.
LU2	16	B	21	H	This unit is a lowland floodplain and is in a generally undisturbed condition. A thick riparian growth occurs in this area and is made up of willows, cottonwoods, sycamores, and some alder. The edges are well defined by the tree canopy. The visual quality of this unit is moderate and the sensitivity to change is high.
LD3	9	C	12	M	This unit is also heavily modified by agriculture. A more formalized field crop exists and a more cohesive rural image is a result. The unit is classified as a lowland, disturbed area and the edges are defined by the riparian corridor and hillside areas. The quality is rated as low, and the sensitivity to change is moderate.
UD4	20	A	15	M	Because of the presence of water and several groupings of large oak groves, this unit has been rated as having a high visual quality. Even though this area has been disturbed by agricultural uses, its unity with the adjacent units and the general variety of elements is positive. The sensitivity to change is moderate.
HD5	11	C	15	M	This hillside unit is primarily covered with avocado and citrus orchards with a scattering of residences and estates. Because of the lack of variety, the visual quality is rated as low and the visual sensitivity is moderate.
HU6	13	B	23	H	This large unit is characterized by gentle to steep slopes and is covered by native Diegan Sage Scrub with Oak Woodland areas found in the drainage swales. This area has a moderate visual quality and is highly sensitive to change.
UD7	11	C	14	M	A small knoll covered with avocado groves is the focal point of this unit. Agricultural uses and structures dominate the visual setting. The rated quality is low and the sensitivity to change is moderate.
UD8	10	C	13	M	This small canyon, defined by adjacent low ridges, is covered with native scrub and grasslands. The area receives a low quality rating and a moderate sensitivity to change because of the lack of visual variety.
LD9	5	C	17	M	This lowland floodplain area has been dramatically disturbed in the recent past. The area would normally support a dense canopy of willows. Though somewhat natural in appearance, it is clear that a gap has been created in the riparian corridor. The visual quality is low and the sensitivity to change is moderate.
UD10	7	C	7	L	The stockyards, pastures, and structures of the operating Verboom dairy are the central elements of this unit. Though generally rural in character, the intensity of the stockyards makes the visual quality low and the variety of disturbances makes the sensitivity to change also low.
LU11	16	B	21	H	This large unit covers the intact riparian corridor running through the project site. Thick tree canopy of willows, sycamores, and cottonwood are the primary elements of the unit. The visual quality is moderate and the sensitivity to change is high.
LD12	7	C	12	M	This unit consists of a large open pasture that has been used for grazing. It has a distinctive rural character that is punctuated by several farm structures. The area is within the floodplain and was probably part of the riparian corridor at one time. The visual quality is low and the sensitivity to change is moderate.

**TABLE 4.13-1  
LANDSCAPE UNIT CHARACTER AND RATING SUMMARY**

LANDSCAPE UNIT <sup>a</sup>	QUALITY	QUALITY CATEGORY <sup>b</sup>	SENSITIVITY	SENSITIVITY LEVEL <sup>c</sup>	DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY
UD13	10	C	12	M	This slightly rolling area adjacent to the river is generally covered with grasslands with several oak trees. The grasslands probably resulted from past disturbances such as grazing and orchard production. The unit is rated low visual quality with moderate sensitivity to change.
UU14	13	B	20	H	The area is vegetated with large oak and sycamores with significant undergrowth. The visual quality is moderate due to these large trees, and the sensitivity to change is high.
HD15	13	B	22	H	This hillside area has been disturbed by the construction of the San Diego aqueduct and contains several small scale structures and access roads. The hillside is visually prominent and the landform is intact. The unit received a moderate visual quality that is highly sensitive to change.
UU16	13	B	21	H	A small oak woodland exists between the river corridor to the north and the knoll to the south. Several rock outcrops, oaks, and understory create the appearance of a natural area. The visual quality is moderate and the sensitivity to change is high.
LD17	0	C	0	L	This unit is the site of the abandoned Lucio Family Dairy. Because of the state of abandonment and level of disturbance of the floodplain, the area has a low visual quality rating and a low sensitivity to change.
UD18	11	C	3	L	This upland area is associated with the Lucio Dairy site. It contains several residences and other structures on each side of the highway. It is in a state of disrepair and as such has a low quality rating and low sensitivity to change.
UD19	11	C	17	M	This highly disturbed upland area consists of mining operations and processing plant areas. Several smaller water bodies exist as part of the river corridor through the area. However, due to the level of disturbance, the unit is rated as having a low visual quality with a moderate sensitivity to change.
LD20	14	B	10	L	This lowland unit is made up almost entirely of an open water body area which was created as part of the sand and gravel mining area. Generally speaking, the presence of any water body regardless of origin, is considered to be positive. Because of this, the unit is considered to have a moderate visual quality with low sensitivity to change.
HU21	20	A	21	H	This unit is the largest unit found on site and is made up of Gregory Mountain. The area is generally steep and covered with major rock outcrops, oak woodland, coastal sage, and mixed chaparral. The intactness of this unit, along with the variety of textures and the scale of the landform, combines to give the unit a high quality rating with high sensitivity to change.
<p><sup>a</sup> For landscape unit descriptions, the first letter indicates the general elevation of the area: L = lowland, U = upland, and H = hillside; the second letter indicates the relative disturbance of the area: U = undisturbed, D = disturbed.</p> <p><sup>b</sup> For quality categories, A (high) = 19 or more, B (moderate) = 12-18, C (low) = 11 or less.</p> <p><sup>c</sup> For sensitivity levels, H (high) = 19 or more, M (moderate) = 12-18, L (low) = 11 or less.</p> <p>Source: KTU+A, 1998</p>					

### Composite Ratings and Resource Classifications

Resource classifications result from overlaying the visual quality, sensitivity, and distance zones. Exhibit 4.13-2 delineates the three composite resource classifications for the site using the BLM Visual Resource Management definitions of management classification, which describe the different degrees of modification allowed to the basic elements of the landscape. The majority of Gregory Mountain is placed in resource Class 2.

Major visual elements introduced into this area would require extensive screening and on-site replacement/rehabilitation. Some smaller areas of the project site (and directly adjacent areas) have been grouped in the Class 3 category. This area can be disturbed but must be visually subordinate to the other elements of the landscape. The remaining areas are grouped into Class 4, where disturbances can be visible and even dominant, but should still retain the line, texture, form, and color of the adjacent landscape units.

### Existing Landscape Character

#### Pattern Elements

A graphic summary of the predominant visual characteristics of the subregional San Luis Rey Unit and individual landscape units is shown on Exhibit 4.13-3. Pattern elements found in the project area landscape include form, spatial position relative to the viewer, line, color, texture and detail. Those elements, which are described below, denote the physical characteristics of features as seen by a viewer in the area of Gregory Canyon.

- **Form**—The overall landforms of the area are generally large scale and dominant. The typical angle of slope is between 15 and 20 degrees with slopes ranging from 10 to 35 percent. The bottoms of slopes are generally concave and gentle and convex toward the tops. A strong contrast between these slopes and the ground-plane exists. The abrupt change in slope at the floodplain level is very apparent. The primary ridgelines of Gregory Mountain dominate the view while secondary ridgelines occur perpendicular to the primary.
- **Spatial Position**—The spatial positioning of the majority of observation points is low, with all elements at eye level or above.
- **Line**—Line characteristics are not readily apparent in undisturbed areas, with the exception of ridgelines. Road disturbances and pasture edges represent the majority of lines seen in the landscape.
- **Color**—Color of the area is dominated by native chaparral and sage cover, rock outcrops, oaks, willows, and sycamores. Grasslands also make up a significant portion of the color scheme in the area.
- **Texture and Detail**—Texture and detail are primarily created by the contrast of rock outcrops and larger shrub massing against a typically mono-texture native cover.

#### *Pattern Character*

Pattern character describes the visual interaction of the various landscape features and provides an indication of the way in which those various pattern elements combine to create a particular scenic quality. The characters of patterns in the area are harmony, variety and contrast, and scale, as described below:

- **Harmony**—The natural elements of the hillsides and the floodplain are considered to be strongly harmonious. Likewise, the agricultural uses of pastures, orchards, and row crops are



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also harmonious with each other and the natural environment. Non-harmonious elements include the mining operations, roadway cuts, and intensive dairy operations.

- **Variety and Contrast**—Variety and contrast in the area exists, creating interest in the view. Though the majority of the area is harmonious, enough visual contrast exists between elements to create a dynamic visual character.
- **Scale**—The scale of the area varies from the large landforms of Gregory Mountain to the detail of the riparian corridor. Most cultural elements are in scale with the natural elements, with the exception of the mining operations.

#### *Visual Quality Characteristics*

The visual quality of the area is summarized by the vividness (memorability), intactness, and scarcity of the specific visual elements. Because of contrasting texture, scale, and color, a vivid view does exist in the area. However, atmospheric haze common in this region detracts from this vividness at distances greater than one mile. The relative intactness of the natural areas and the relationship between the built and natural environment contributes to the visual quality of the area. This intactness helps to make this area unique within San Diego County. Visual quality increases to the east and decreases towards the coast line.

Though the area is considered to be intact, a variety of visual disruptions have occurred in the area. These damages generally stand out due to differences in the contrast value, scale, or form of the disturbance. Hillside cuts for roadways stand out primarily due to contrasts in value and color as well as line. Mining disturbances are noticeable due to color, form, texture, and line contrasts with surrounding areas. Development of some hillside residences has been damaging to the visual environment primarily due to form, scale, texture, and color. Agricultural orchard development of hillsides contrasts mostly in texture but is generally not perceived negatively.

### **4.13.2 IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Two sources for aesthetics significance criteria are CEQA Guidelines and the County Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA.<sup>1</sup> Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines indicates that a project would have a significant aesthetic impact if it would: (a) have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; (b) substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; (c) substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or (d) create a new source of substantial light or glare which would affect day or nighttime views in the area. Section 15064(b) of the CEQA Guidelines recognizes that the significance of an activity may vary with the setting, such that an activity which may not be significant in an urban area may be significant in a rural area.

The County of San Diego (1991) uses the following criteria to determine significant visual effects:

- Physical change which is determined to be in substantial conflict with the character of the project area as defined by the approved community plan or as defined in Section 9.2 of the San Diego County CEQA Guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Since the preparation of the EIR the County Guidelines have been rescinded. However, this discussion has been retained in order to address a comment on the Draft EIR.

- Physical change which may preclude future compliance with the design criteria of the project area as defined by the approved design guidelines for the area.
- Physical change which is not in conformance with the Hillside Development Policy, Board of Supervisors Policy I-73.
- Physical change which will substantially affect the viewshed of a designated Scenic highway (as defined in the Scenic Highway Element of the General Plan) regardless of priority status.
- Physical change which will substantially degrade the quality of an identified visual resource, including but not limited to: unique topographic features, undisturbed native vegetation, surface waters and major drainages, a park or recreational area.

While relevant to the proposed project, the criteria above do not present specific thresholds by which to evaluate potential visual impacts. Therefore, the County of San Diego CEQA Guidelines, as well as professionally accepted criteria developed by KTU+A, were used to formulate measurable thresholds of significance applicable to the Gregory Canyon natural and visual settings and project type. For the purposes of this assessment, a significant impact is defined as a change to the visual environment that is visible to a moderate level of viewers (1,000 or more per day) and that contains at least one of the following possible conditions:

- For a significant **landform impact** to occur, the project would permanently change the landform character of an area. This change must not only be noticeable to a moderate to large number of viewers, but the contrast must dominate other adjacent landforms.
- For a significant **visual quality impact** to occur, it must clearly contrast with the existing visual elements of a moderate or high quality landscape assessment unit. This contrast must be clearly visible to a moderate to large number of viewers and the contrast must dominate the visual scene to the point where the character and quality of the immediate area is permanently changed.
- For a significant **visual resource impact** to occur, a substantial amount of the physical resources that make up the local visual character would be removed. These physical resources include vegetation, rock structures, naturally appearing water, structures, or landforms that make up the individual visual resources and contribute to the character of the landscape assessment unit.
- For a significant **view quality impact** to occur, the project would block a substantial percentage of an existing view corridor of a regionally or subregionally important view scene, or prevent the physical or visual access to a viewing point from which the viewing scene can be seen. An impact would also occur if the project highly contrasts and dominates the viewing scene to the point where the view scene quality is substantially degraded.
- For a significant **neighborhood/community character impact** to occur, the project would prevent the attainment of a design or other aesthetic goal that is part of an adopted community plan or other County approved document. This visual character type is determined by line, form, color, contrast, texture, cultural features, scale and other elements that contribute to the character of the neighborhood and that are identified as important to the community.

### 4.13.3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

#### 4.13.3.1 Visual Analysis Methodology

Several visual impact methodologies have been developed by federal agencies for the assessment of visual impacts. The methodologies described in Appendix P are a combination of the BLM/Forest Service/FHWA and County processes. In addition, KTU+A has developed visual sensitivity and contrast rating methodologies based on a combination of these processes. The Scenic Quality Inventory and Sensitivity Evaluation Charts are included in Appendix P.

After establishing existing conditions, the primary steps used in the visual impact analysis include:

- Descriptions and simulations of the project appearance;
- Development of a subjective rating of the contrast of the project appearance and effects on the visual resources; and
- Suggestion of mitigations, revised simulations, and assessments after mitigations.

#### 4.13.3.2 Visual Impact Assessment

##### Project Elements

Exhibit 4.13-4 delineates the major project elements that could affect the visual environment. The major elements affecting the visual environment include the landfill face, landfill surface, operation area structures, the borrow/stockpile surfaces and access roads, the main access road and bridge, and slopes associated with the expansion of SR 76. These elements are considered to have visual prominence due to their relative size, contrast with the visual setting or the location relative to major viewing groups. In some cases, the location of the project element would be within the landfill footprint or the support area, and is therefore, dominated by the other visually prominent elements of the footprint.

Since the landfill project would utilize the canyon and area fill methodology for trash placement, and the final elevation of the last phase of the landfill would be 1,100 feet amsl, the landfill face would be the most highly visible project component. The downdrains would also be highly visible at close to moderate viewing distances since they would be laid perpendicular to slope contours and located atop the final landfill surface. In addition, the above-ground laterals and a main header pipe connected to a flare station would be visible at close to moderate viewing distances.

Discussions of physical changes outside of the project footprint will be limited to the removal of abandoned structures and livestock pens associated with the non-operating Lucio dairy farm. The removal of these structures and the replacement of livestock pens and pastures with native vegetation would be considered a positive impact to the local visual setting.

Other elements would be visually insignificant and would not be noticed or perceived as substantial by the general viewer because they are not of a size to be seen as dominant elements from the viewpoint of the nearest sensitive viewer, which is considered to be the highway driver.

The overall appearance of visually prominent project elements is shown on the simulations for each key view in Exhibits 4.13-5 through 4.13-14.





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### Project Phasing

The conceptual engineering design proposes four excavation and three fill sequences. All staged excavations will be completed in a sequential manner within each phase to minimize ground surface disturbance, as described in Chapter 3.0. A computer-generated model of this final landform, along with the final form of the stockpiles, is shown on Figure 10 of Appendix P.

For the purposes of this visual technical study, the project is considered to have five periods of time: initial construction (0-2 years); initial project (3-14 years); mid-term project (15-24 years); final project (25-30 years); and final revegetated closed project (30+ years). Phased closure of portions of the landfill may be implemented throughout the project development.

### Project Viewsheds

Distance from the project, frequency of view, length of view, viewer activity, viewer perception, and viewing conditions all determine the significance of the visual impact. The physical limits of views are objective, as are the quantity of viewers. However, viewer perception and reaction to visual changes are subjective.

Viewsheds are those areas from which unobstructed views of project elements can be seen. A computerized analysis of topographic elements and viewsheds was completed by analyzing USGS Digital Elevation Models that have been modified to include the stockpile and landfill landforms. SR 76, a public highway traveling through the site, is considered a public viewing location and is, therefore, included in the analysis.

Appendix P describes the process by which viewsheds to and from the various project elements were determined. Figures in Appendix P depict the various viewsheds and the degree of visibility of project elements within those viewsheds. The following discussion summarizes the findings of the three-dimensional, computer-generated viewshed analyses.

- Landfill Viewshed—In general, the north side of the landfill has much higher visibility than the south side. Also, the higher elevations have a greater level of visibility, since it rises above some of the surrounding landforms.
- Borrow/Stockpile Area B Viewshed—Area B has a similar viewshed to that of the landfill. Because of the horizontal and vertical extent of the stockpile, its viewshed is similar to the landfill but with greater visibility in Rice Canyon and Couser Canyon. The views of Borrow/Stockpile Area B are much more limited to the northeast, along the eastern limits of SR 76.
- Borrow/Stockpile Area A Viewshed—Area A has a similar viewshed to that of the landfill. The viewshed is greater than Borrow/Stockpile Area B towards the northeast (in the eastern portions of the SR 76 corridor), as well as in Rice Canyon. Borrow/Stockpile Area A has less visibility than Area B in the Couser Canyon viewshed, as well as in the western portions of the SR 76 corridor. This is due to its lower overall elevation.
- Facility Area Viewshed—The facility area is of a limited size and is located at a relatively low elevation. However, the viewshed is substantial to the north of the facility area, but is much more limited in Rice Canyon. The proposed location of the desilting basins and the grading required to make this portion of the site suitable would have visibility from the highway as well as other important areas in Rice and Pala Mesa Canyon areas. Visibility is high towards the northeast, as seen from SR 76. However, substantial vegetation does exist

along the highway and blocks most of this visibility. No visibility of the facility area or desilting basins will occur in the Couser Canyon area.

- Access Bridge Viewshed—The access road is at a lower elevation and will have a small viewshed, limited to portions of SR 76 and the subject property. The bridge over the San Luis Rey River will be slightly more visible. Viewshed modeling of the bridge assumes a highpoint elevation of 315.5 amsl along the 638-foot length, as well as a three-foot high noise barrier wall. The viewshed includes the upper elevations located northeast and southwest of the project site.
- Other Project Elements—As noted previously, various other project elements have not been included in this viewshed analysis since they are too small or are within the footprint of project elements that would dominate. The access road and the powerline relocation are not large enough or at a high enough elevation to be seen from distant viewsheds. Their visibility would fall within the viewsheds of the landfill, stockpiles and bridge. These elements are discussed in relationship to the photographic simulations.
- Landfill Composite Viewshed—A composite of the viewsheds, shown on (Exhibit 4.13-15), has been overlaid on a USGS map to help identify areas potentially affected by changes in the visual environment. This map also breaks the viewsheds into specific subarea unit viewsheds. The acreage for each viewshed is summarized on Table 3 of Appendix P. A total of 10 key views were selected that best represent the probable view as seen by different viewer groups in different viewsheds. These key views were used to simulate the various elements of the project.

#### Project Viewers

Three types of viewers were identified, residents, highway motorists, and agricultural workers. Each is described below.

#### Residents

Residential viewers are considered the most sensitive viewer group to changes in the visual environment because of their financial investment in the area, their time spent in the area and the types of activities conducted that tend to allow viewing time and attention to scenic resources.

(Exhibit 4.13-15) indicates the existing structures within the study area. The actual number of residential viewers is probably less than assumed since some facilities thought to be residences may be unoccupied structures. It is not possible to verify all possible residential structures, so the worst case situation has been assumed. Table 4 of Appendix P summarizes the existing viewers, indicates the current zoning of the viewshed areas, and estimates the potential homes within each subarea viewshed. The visual analysis assumes a maximum development potential based on underlying zoning and does not take into account parcel size, topography, or other environmental restrictions based on habitats and floodplains. Therefore, the number of potential landfill viewers is a worst case scenario.

#### Highway Motorists

While SR 76 is not designated as a scenic highway in the project area, based on the criteria in the County Scenic Highway Element it appears that SR 76 could meet the criteria. Therefore, viewers from SR 76 are assumed to have a high sensitivity to visual change. The estimated number of existing and future viewers using the highway in both directions has been developed based on current and projected traffic counts (Darnell & Associates, 1999), as summarized in

Table 5 of Appendix P. In general, eastbound viewers will have more distant and longer views of the project elements. Westbound viewers will have shorter views; however, these views are more directly oriented towards the landfill.

Exhibit 4.13-16 delineates the locations and duration of time that the average driver would see the landfill. As part of the overall driving experience, the actual length of view is very short. The highway analysis assumed an average driving speed of 40 miles per hour. Visibility of the upper and lower stockpiles and other support facilities were not included in this analysis since the landfill represents the worst case scenario. Existing intervening topography and vegetation substantially reduce the overall visibility of the site Exhibit 4.13-16. The road segments from which the project site would be visible are relatively short and the view to the east is regularly broken up by masses of large trees within the highway right-of-way and major landforms. However, the duration and location of highway views could change dramatically if the adjacent screening provided by existing vegetation was removed.

Exhibit 4.13-16 indicates the general angle of view and relative area of the landfill that is visible from SR 76. Exhibit 4.13-16 also shows the normal cone and angle of vision and how it decreases proportionally to vehicle speed. The actual peripheral vision and angle of vision is limited by driver activity and speed, particularly given the fact that the landfill would not be the primary view of a driver on SR 76. The roadway is generally difficult to maneuver at high speeds and requires a straight forward orientation most of the time. Although duration and visibility are limited, SR 76 connects scenic areas and many drive SR 76 for scenic pleasures. Therefore, motorists would be considered as having a moderate to high sensitivity to changes in the visual environment.

A summary viewshed showing the visibility of the three project landforms is shown on Figure 19 of Appendix P. This viewshed focuses on the landfill and stockpile surfaces. As shown, the highway is located in such a position to see most of the landfill and the stockpiles. However, substantial vegetation exists to block much of this view, and drivers' vertical and horizontal cones of vision would limit visibility more and would shift the focus of attention onto the roadway.

#### Agricultural Workers

Livestock and agricultural workers are the closest of all viewer groups, but they are not as directly exposed in terms of duration as the residential viewers and, due to their typical activities, would not be considered to be as sensitive to changes in the visual environment.

#### 4.13.3.3 Photographic Simulation Analysis

Photographs were taken from a number of points within approximately three to four miles of the proposed project site.<sup>2</sup> From these photographs, key views of the project site were selected by weighing a combination of factors including the greatest number of potential viewers, the sensitivity of those viewers, the highest scenic quality found within the project vicinity, any existing view corridors and the most sensitive areas subject to change. The technical methodologies used are described in detail in Appendix P.

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<sup>2</sup> The human eye directly sees objects in a manner that is most similar to viewing from a 50-millimeter (mm) lens. However, with peripheral vision, the human eye sees objects in a manner that is similar to viewing from a 28 mm lens. To obtain a balance between these two circumstances, a 35 mm lens was used. A 35 mm lens is commonly used in visual simulations.

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Exhibits 4.13-5 through 4.13-14 depict four photographic conditions for the various key views analyzed: 1) existing conditions; 2) midterm project phase; 3) final project phase with only minimal revegetation efforts assumed; and 4) a final simulation including all proposed mitigation and depicting a level of maturity in revegetation efforts. This would only occur, however, if the landscape screening and revegetation occurred in earlier project phases instead of at the end of the landfill life.

### Viewing Conditions

The viewshed maps (Chapter 4 of Appendix P) only consider intervening topography. Typically, existing structures and trees screen large areas of views, reducing the actual areas that have visibility of the project. The viewsheds depicted represent the worst case scenario for areas potentially affected by changes in the visual environment caused by the landfill. The death or removal of trees and the expansion or demolition of structures is likely to occur over time. Landforms, on the other hand, do not change that dramatically over time.

Lighting can have a significant effect on views and visibility. In general, backlighting from the sun tends to wash out detail and increase ridgeline prominence. Foreground lighting from the sun will increase detail, texture, and color differences. Intermittent sunlight through cloud openings can focus attention on areas while de-emphasizing other areas. Diffused light through clouds and fog can decrease contrast dramatically.

Atmospheric conditions in the Inland North County tend to be hazy a large percentage of time. In fact, it was very difficult to find days clear enough for photography work on the site. Within a dozen site visits, only one during a Santa Ana condition proved to be clear enough for photos. A combination of fog, mist, haze, and smog combine to decrease visibility to less than one mile for many months during the year. Areas beyond three miles are not considered significantly impacted by the project since atmospheric conditions coupled with lack of detail, color, texture, and limited cone of vision tend to lower the contrast of changes in the visual environment. Exhibit 4.13-15 indicates the relative distance the viewshed is from the landfill.

### Contrast Ratings

All the factors affecting visual quality and visual change, and all project elements, were assessed using each photographic simulation. The simulations for the 10 key views assumed that revegetation during all phases of landfill development would be required as part of standard slope stabilization and erosion (see project design features in Section 4.4) and invasive weed control practices (see Habitat Enhancement Plan, Appendix L). Revegetation for purposes of visual screening or blending were not assumed to be part of the project, nor were revegetation efforts related to biological habitat restoration (see Habitat Enhancement Plan, Appendix L).

Various contrast criteria (i.e., divergence in colors, form, line, texture, and character) were evaluated to determine the impacts of each of three timeframes spread throughout the operating life of the landfill, both with and without mitigation.

#### **4.13.3.4 Project Element Impact Summary**

Table 4.13-2 summarizes the impacts to each key viewpoint based on each project element. In applying the significance thresholds identified in Section 4.13.2, the impact of a project element is significant if at least two or more of the key views have been rated as adverse or if at least one key view is rated as significant. Determination of conformance to BLM visual resource guidelines was also assessed.

**TABLE 4.13-2  
KEY VIEW IMPACT SUMMARY**

PROJECT ELEMENT	SIGNIFICANCE AS SEEN FROM KEY VIEWS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Access Road	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-
Access Road Bridge	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-	-	-
Lower Stockpile	A	-	S	-	-	-	A	I	-	-
Upper Stockpile	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	I	S	-
Ancillary Support Facilities	-	-	A	-	S	S	A	A	-	-
Landfill Face/Surface	A	A	S	S	S	S	S	A	-	S
Relocation of Utility Tower	-	-	I	I	S	S	I	I	-	-
<b>Composite Impact</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>
<i>Significance Levels:</i> <i>S = Significant</i> <i>A = Adverse but Less Than Significant</i> <i>I = Insignificant</i> <i>- = Not Seen or No Impact</i> <i>Source: KTU+A, 1998</i>										

The visual impact study indicates that all project elements meet the initial threshold criteria of being visible to at least 1,000 viewers per day, because all elements are visible to the highway.

By contrast, the number of stationary viewers (less than 100) is substantially below the stated 1,000 viewers per day listed for the threshold for these impacts. Therefore, from a stationary viewer (primarily residential) standpoint, the following impacts are generally considered adverse but less than significant within the context of the threshold criteria.

Table 4.13-3 provides a comprehensive summary of the project impacts, proposed mitigation, anticipated mitigation effectiveness, and level of significance after mitigation implementation. The text following Table 4.13-3 provides a detailed evaluation of each of the project components and its potential visual effects.

#### Access Road and Bridge

The entry road leading from the highway edge to the bridge would be seen from a very limited area of the viewshed. No significant grading is proposed. The removal of abandoned dairy structures and livestock pens would improve the visual quality of this area, since it is currently in a visually degraded state.

An adverse but less than significant impact to visual quality is expected for the access road on the south side of the bridge, leading up to the facility area. Slopes created by the entry road construction to connect the highway with the landfill would in most cases be permanent. However, no adverse impacts are expected for landform quality (minor grading proposed), visual quality (no current quality in this area and minimal project contrast), view quality (no regional or subregional view scenes or corridors are in this area), visual resources (no existing resources exist), or neighborhood character (no specific guidelines or policies apply) for the portion of the access road leading up to the bridge, because the viewshed is limited.

**TABLE 4.13-3  
VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY**

<b>IMPACT CATEGORY</b>	<b>IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>MITIGATION SUMMARY</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS OF MITIGATION</b>	<b>LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION</b>
<b>Access Road</b>				
Landform Quality	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Visual Character/Quality	Adverse but less than significant	None required	N/A	Adverse but less than significant
Visual Resources	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
View Quality	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
<b>Access Road Bridge</b>				
Landform Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Visual Character/Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Visual Resources	<b>Significant</b>	Landscape screening; major tree groupings; native revegetation and landscaping	Fully mitigated	Insignificant
View Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
<b>Lower Stockpile</b>				
Landform Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Landscape screening; landform screening; landform grading; major tree groupings; native revegetation and landscaping; contrast and color matching; texture matching	Fully mitigated	Adverse but less than significant
Visual Character/Quality	Adverse but less than significant	None required	N/A	Adverse but less than significant
Visual Resources	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
View Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
<b>Upper Stockpile</b>				
Landform Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Landscape screening; landform screening; landform grading; major tree groupings; native revegetation and landscaping; contrast and color matching; texture matching	Fully mitigated	Adverse but less than significant

**TABLE 4.13-3  
VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)**

<b>IMPACT CATEGORY</b>	<b>IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>MITIGATION SUMMARY</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS OF MITIGATION</b>	<b>LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION</b>
Visual Character/Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Same as above	Fully mitigated	Adverse but less than significant
Visual Resources	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
View Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	Adverse but less than significant	None required	N/A	Adverse but less than significant
<b>Ancillary Support Facilities</b>				
Landform Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Visual Character/Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Landscape screening; landform screening; landform grading; rock outcrop placement; major tree groupings; native revegetation and landscaping; contrast and color matching; texture matching	Fully mitigated	Insignificant
Visual Resources	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
View Quality	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	No impact	None required	N/A	Insignificant
<b>Landfill Face / Slope / Surface</b>				
Landform Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Landscape screening; landform screening; landform grading; rock outcrop placement; major tree groupings; native revegetation and landscaping; contrast and color matching; texture matching; engineering structure adjustments (color and placement)	Partially mitigated but still significant	<b>Significant</b>
Visual Character/Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Same as above	Partially mitigated but still adverse	Adverse but less than significant
Visual Resources	<b>Significant</b>	Same as above	Partially mitigated but still adverse	Adverse but less than significant
View Quality	Adverse but less than significant	None required	N/A	Adverse but less than significant
Neighborhood Character	Adverse but less than significant	None required	N/A	Adverse but less than significant

**TABLE 4.13-3  
VISUAL IMPACT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)**

<b>IMPACT CATEGORY</b>	<b>IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>MITIGATION SUMMARY</b>	<b>EFFECTIVENESS OF MITIGATION</b>	<b>LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION</b>
<b>Utility Tower Relocation</b>				
Landform Quality	<b>Significant</b>	Landform grading; rock outcrop placement; contrast and color matching; texture matching	Fully mitigated	Insignificant
Visual Character/Quality	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Visual Resources	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
View Quality	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
Neighborhood Character	Insignificant	None required	N/A	Insignificant
<i>Source: KTU+A, 1998</i>				

No mitigation is required by CEQA to eliminate the adverse visual quality impact. Mitigation for other significant impacts, such as revegetation of the slopes and roadbed edge areas with compatible native plant species would also serve to reduce adverse visual quality impacts associated with the access road and bridge.

The construction of the bridge would result in the loss of major riparian trees within the clearing zone needed for bridge construction and channel excavation. The existing natural resources are visible to a significant number of highway drivers and their loss would be noticeable and negative. The project would mitigate the significant impact to visual resources by planting large riparian trees along with the associated understory found within these riparian zones.

No impacts would result to landform quality since no major visible grading would be required for the access road and bridge and the necessary minor grading would not dominate the landform. Likewise, visual quality, view quality and neighborhood character impacts would not exceed significance thresholds. No visual quality impacts are expected since the extent of change and the adjacent low quality visual ranking of the abandoned dairy farm make the proposed contrast low and visual change minor. View quality impacts are less than significant since no views in the immediate area exist that would be affected by the bridge, and the bridge itself may actually increase views of the river corridor. Finally, since the local community plans do not include the identification of important design goals or resources, the bridge would not have any significant neighborhood character impact.

#### Borrow/Stockpile Area A

Borrow/Stockpile Area A would be located in a canyon area that is highly visible to highway drivers as well as residents in Rice and Couser Canyons. Although the canyon is natural in its appearance based on its landform, the visual quality of this landscape unit is considered low due primarily to the disturbed nature of what is on top of this natural landform. Native vegetation is missing from the top, sides and bottom of this landform. The top and sides of the canyon consist mostly of invasive weed species. The bottom of the canyon contains row crops, that change from year to year. In addition to the vegetative cover, an abandoned farmhouse is located within this unit and is in disrepair with trash scattered throughout the canyon top and side slope area. The structure detracts from the visual quality of the area. (The farmhouse is not an historic resource; see Section 4.11 for a discussion regarding historic resources.) The sensitivity to change or the ability of the site to absorb change is considered to be moderate, primarily due to its disturbed nature. Given the levels of disturbance, the visual resource class of Area A is Class 4. While the landform is natural in appearance, the visual surface is disturbed (see below for a discussion regarding landform). Based on these conditions, Borrow/Stockpile Area A would have an adverse but less than significant impact on visual quality.

Landform quality impacts would be more dramatic. Although Borrow/Stockpile Area A has been concentrated into the smallest area possible and blended into adjacent landforms, consistent with engineering and feasibility analyses, the proposed stockpile area would result in a substantial mound and a wide area used for excavation. The project would revegetate Borrow/Stockpile Area A during the initial construction phase. The revegetation plan would take into account contrast, color, and texture matching so that it can blend back into the local setting better.

No view quality effects are expected since the stockpile would not block any subregionally significant view scenes or view corridors. No significant visual resources would be removed

from the stockpile site; therefore, no visual resource impacts would result. Similarly, since no specific neighborhood resource guidelines or policies are applicable to this area, no neighborhood character impacts would result.

A variety of mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project to reduce the significant landform quality impact, and would indirectly minimize the adverse, but less than significant, visual quality impact. Revegetation, taking into account contrast, color, and texture matching, would blend the area back into the local setting better and reduce the visual quality impact. In addition, landform screening, including major tree groupings, at the edges of Borrow/Stockpile Area A would screen and reduce the landform quality impact. The grading plan would incorporate contouring of landforms to blend the general forms of land masses on part of the lower stockpile areas. Gentle grading and curvilinear shapes would blend the top and side slopes in with the natural topography, thereby avoiding undifferentiated, flat slopes. These measures are described in greater detail in Section 4.13-4.

#### Borrow/Stockpile Area B

Borrow/Stockpile Area B would be located in a canyon that has a natural appearance. This canyon area is highly visible to highway drivers as well as residents in Rice and Couser Canyons, especially along Couser Canyon Road. The contrast with the existing visual setting would be high. The visual quality of this landscape unit is moderate. The sensitivity to change is high and the ability of the site to absorb change is considered to be low. The visual resource class of Borrow/Stockpile B is Class 3. Based on these conditions, the Borrow/Stockpile Area B would have a significant impact on visual quality.

Landform quality impacts would be more extensive for Borrow/Stockpile Area B than those of Area A. Although Area B has been concentrated into the smallest area possible and blended into adjacent landforms, consistent with engineering and feasibility analyses, the proposed stockpile area would result in a substantial mound and a wide area used for excavation and cut slopes. The proposed form of the stockpile area would be engineered and would not fit into the adjacent landforms. Because the area is highly visible, would likely remain unvegetated while active, and the overall size and form of the stockpile would be different from the adjacent area, it would have a significant impact on the landform quality of the area.

In addition, due to the substantial change to the visual environment, Borrow/Stockpile Area B could make it difficult for the community to attain the broader visual quality and character they have envisioned. Therefore, an adverse but less than significant impact would occur to the neighborhood character quality.

No view quality (no subregionally important view scenes or view corridors exist) or visual resource quality impacts (limited visual resources exist on this site that are visible) are expected for Borrow/Stockpile Area B.

The project would incorporate the same measures discussed previously for Borrow/Stockpile Area A, including landform grading and revegetation techniques for Area B. The project would revegetate the leading edge landforms (as seen from highly visible areas within the viewshed) and would use landform grading techniques to blend the shape of the stockpile in with adjacent landforms. The project would grade the face of the stockpile leading edge to have a low point that mimics a canyon draw. The contractor/operator would not allow a flat slope surface and would be required to provide additional landscape screening. Additionally, the project would provide landscape screening around the lower desilting basin. The project would plant a dense

grouping of riparian trees around the desilting basin, as well as leading up a draw of the stockpile leading edge. With these mitigation measures which have been incorporated into the project, the significant visual quality and landform quality impacts of Area B would be reduced to a less than significant level.

#### Ancillary Facilities

Visibility of the ancillary facilities is somewhat obscured by the landforms in the area. As long as the knoll to the north of the facility area were preserved, the knoll would provide a screening function for most of the ancillary facilities. Moderate contrast ratings associated with the facility area will occur to key viewpoints 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (see Exhibits 4.13-7 and 4.13-9 through 4.13-12). Because of the lower elevation of these facilities and the partial screening effects of the existing knoll, their prominence would not be as great as the landfill. However, since the facilities, particularly the methane extraction structures and pipes, do not appear to be part of the natural or agricultural character of the area, they would contrast and be visible to many of the SR 76 viewers. The grading would be highly visible for SR 76 viewers. These project elements would have a significant impact on the visual quality of the area.

No landform quality impacts are expected to occur since no major landform changes are expected. Furthermore, no impacts are expected to occur to visual resources of the area since those resources are limited and primarily consist of grass covered meadows. View quality impacts would be less than significant since the ancillary facilities areas would not affect any subregionally significant views, either as part of the view scene or viewing corridor. The local or community plans and documents list no community resources affected by this project element; therefore, neighborhood character impacts would be less than significant.

The project proposes two areas for desilting basins, one for the eastern and one for the western edge of the landfill. Because the eastern desilting basin would be at a low elevation and directly adjacent the landfill footprint, it would have a low visual prominence. The western desilting basin would be adjacent to a steep slope and grading required to accommodate the desilting basin would be highly visible for SR 76 viewers. However, the existing knoll would be left to help screen views of most of the support facilities, including the western desilting basin, thereby precluding significant landform quality impacts. The project would provide landscaping to screen the taller facilities in this area and hide the lower berms associated with the desilting basin.

The project would plant major tree groupings, as well as native revegetation and rock outcrop placement, on the facility area slopes. Also, the project would paint or use materials for facilities and miscellaneous structures that fit into the local color environment. The project would design the structures to match adjacent textures. The project would grade the slopes associated with the desilting basins (both upper cut slopes and lower berm fill slopes) to ease them into the adjacent natural forms. The project would ensure that the water tank would either be held below the upper elevation of the knoll or, provided that native landscape screening were implemented, would not extend more than three to five feet above the highest point of the knoll. With incorporation of these measures, the visual quality significant impact would be reduced to below a level of significance.

### Landfill Footprint

Significant contrasts associated with the landfill face will occur to key views 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (see Exhibits 4.13-7 through 4.13-12). Significant impacts associated with the landfill surface would occur to all of these key views in addition to key view 10 (Exhibit 4.13-14). A small portion of the surface area would be seen from key views 8 and 10. The proposed landfill would contrast highly with the visual and landform settings. Its overall size, elevation and form would contrast dramatically with the adjacent setting. The position of the view relative to both residential viewer groups as well as highway viewers would make the landfill highly visible.

The landfill would have a negative impact on the visual quality of the area. The landfill occurs either on or next to landscape units that have a high or moderate visual quality, a high to moderate sensitivity to change and is within landscape units that are ranked as having a Visual Resource Class of 2. Based on this, the landfill would have a significant impact on the visual quality of the area.

The project would minimize the impacts by planting major tree groupings using transplanted materials where appropriate, as well as revegetation with native plants and rock outcrop placement along the edges of the landfill. Due to drainage and settlement problems, these elements would not be located too far out from the sides of the landfill (Figure 24 of Appendix P). Project grading would include a transitional blending of the flat landfill face along the bottom and perimeter edges where it meets the existing terrain. The project would place large boulders and trees to resemble the existing ribbon of oak woodland that would be removed by the landfill. The project would place tree groupings in groves below existing swales that contain oaks and sycamores. This extension of natural vegetation communities would help break the geometric lines of the landfill and would help the face blend with the surrounding hillsides.

The project would stabilize permanent slopes with appropriate native plant seed mix and container stock around the edges. In some cases, where phasing may result in changes and/or transitions to the slopes, more temporary erosion control techniques could be utilized. The project would paint drainage and methane extraction structures and pipes to fit into the local color environment and use materials that match adjacent textures. Painting of the structures, pipelines, and other facilities associated with surface drainage, subsurface drainage, and methane gas control will help blend them into the background of the areas that they are traversing.

On the active face of the landfill, the project would hydroseed or revegetate any slope that is anticipated to remain beyond one full year. Project grading would use techniques to blend the landfill with adjacent landforms. The project landscaping plan would take into account the contrast, color, and texture so that it can blend back into the local setting.

These measures would be carefully designed and constructed. Because the surface of the landfill cover may only be two to three feet thick, manipulation of the face could require additional fill material. The creation of ridges and swales would concentrate the flow of water and could cause erosion of the buried fill materials if not properly handled. Boulders and trees set along the edge of the landfill could penetrate the soil layer and allow water into the fill, speeding decomposition unless the drainage and root penetration were accommodated.

Once closure of the landfill is achieved and final cover is completed, a vegetative surface cover utilizing native plant species would be planted and maintained. The central face of the landfill would be planted with native grasses and other shallow rooted plants representative of the inland sage scrub plant community. The plantings would be irrigated by a temporary above-ground

spray irrigation system or would be watered by hand or through the use of on-site water trucks. All supplemental irrigation would be removed once the planting has completely covered the landfill face and was established.

Distinct views of the landfill would be seen due to openings in existing vegetation along SR 76. To reduce the impact of these views, all on-site highway frontage along the south side of SR 76, would be planted with a screen of native or indigenous trees and shrub species that is a minimum of 20 feet wide. Existing trees and shrubs along SR 76 would be saved and supplemented by like species and other fast growing trees to create a naturally landscaped transportation corridor through the property, where appropriate to screen the landfill.

Planting within the highway rights-of-way about midway through the project property where the highway makes a hard turn from heading east/west to north/south would further minimize impacts. This location will require the use of slope plantings up as close as possible to the road shoulder edge. However, since the property is not owned by the applicant, plantings in this area cannot be counted as mitigating this particular visual impact completely.

The landfill would have a negative impact on the landform quality of the area and would sharply contrast with the natural landforms located to the east, south and west of the site. The landfill would exhibit a man-made quality and would not appear as a natural feature. The overall size and mass of the landfill would dominate the visual scene, though the adjacent Gregory Mountain landform would still be superior. The engineered landfill face would be the most apparent landform impact associated with the landfill operation. Because this face would be constructed in phases, its appearance will take on a distinctive age layering. To the degree that it is functionally possible, landform manipulation and surface revegetation should be maximized to help blend the landfill face into the surrounding hillsides. The landfill would have a significant impact on the landform quality of the area.

Landform grading of the benches and lifts would minimize the significant landform quality impact. Additionally, blending of created landforms with adjacent landforms can be achieved by manipulating the landform to resemble or meld with its surroundings, planting to create the pattern resembling the adjacent vegetation matrix and its colors, and incorporating boulders into the final grades to create the rocky texture of the surrounding hillsides. Those measures would reduce the extent of the landform impact; however, due to the sheer size and mass of the landfill, the long-term landform quality impact would remain significant and unmitigable.

The landfill would cause the loss of major visual resources in the area. Extensive amounts of visual resources such as oak trees, native vegetation and rock outcrops in the canyon where the landfill is proposed would be removed. The visibility of the area is high enough to have these visual resource losses noticed. Therefore, the landfill will have a significant impact on the visual resources of the area.

New revegetation areas are required to mitigate for the loss of visual resources. Areas that are within public view should be considered, such as adjacent to the facility area or within the abandoned Lucio Dairy parcels. This revegetation should contain both oak woodland habitats and riparian plantings. These trees and plants should also be placed along the highway so that they can serve the dual purpose of screening the landfill and mitigating for the loss of visual resources. Wherever possible, boulders and rock outcrops should be relocated from disturbed areas to replanted areas. The rock outcrops look most natural at the base of slopes but could also be used along the outer edges of the highway, where appropriate to screen the landfill. With

these mitigation measures, the significant visual resource impact would be reduced to below a level of significance.

The landfill would noticeably alter the character of the visual scene. Though the landfill would not block any views of regionally or subregionally significant view scenes, it is part of the San Luis Rey Valley that is considered to be a subregionally significant view scene. Because of the size of the project, the landfill has the ability to change a significant portion of the valley. However, as illustrated in Exhibits 4.13-6 through 4.13-10, the landfill is not large enough to dominate the visual scene of the entire valley to the point where the view scene quality is substantially degraded. The highest visibility of the project site and valley would generally be from the north. As shown in Exhibit 4.13-11, although the landfill would be visible from the north hillside, the height of the landfill would be below the height of Gregory Mountain. In addition, the landfill would be much smaller in size when compared with the overall size of Gregory Mountain. Therefore, Gregory Mountain would continue to dominate the view of the valley from the north. As shown in Exhibits 4.13-9 and 4.13-10, the closest views of the landfill from the north would be from SR 76. While the landfill would clearly be visible from SR 76, particularly when traveling eastbound, the visibility would be limited to a brief duration due to the speed that would be traveled as well as the varied topography of the area. As illustrated by the remaining exhibits presented in Section 4.13, views of the landfill from the south, west and east would be limited or blocked by the varied topography and vegetation present within the valley. Furthermore, the number of potential viewers of the landfill from private properties would be limited. Therefore, the landfill would have an adverse but less than significant impact on the view quality of the area. Although not significant, with the implementation of mitigation measures discussed previously for visual quality and landform quality impacts, the view quality adverse impact would be further minimized. Mitigation of the visual quality and landform quality impacts would reduce the neighborhood character impact of the landfill.

#### Powerline Realignment

The proposed project would require the eastward relocation of two existing SDG&E high tension power line towers. One additional high tension power line tower would be constructed halfway between the two towers to be relocated. This would occur at a later stage of the landfill development when the fill reaches that area, approximately ten years into the operation. As can be seen in Exhibit 4.13-9, in the existing conditions the mountain creates a backdrop for the towers and the lines are not visible. With the relocation of the towers upslope, the towers would be below the ridgeline. Because these towers would not be intruding into the skyline and based on the open lattice powerline structure, they would be difficult to see from one to three miles, and impossible to see beyond three miles. (This assumes clear atmospheric conditions without haze.) The haze reduces the visibility even further, but a worst-case scenario should be discussed and used for evaluation. Because of the lack of visibility, visual quality, view quality, visual resources and neighborhood character impacts associated with the relocation of the two towers and the creation of three new pads (i.e., two to accommodate the relocation of the towers and one for the new tower) would be considered to be insignificant.

The maintenance road and graded pads associated with the relocated SDG&E towers are generally more visible than the towers themselves. A new access road to these towers would be required, though eventually the upper top of the landfill would be used for access. A significant area of grading would be required to create the three future pads. Because of the elevation of the pads, the number of highway viewers that would see the pad, and due to its extreme cut slopes

and massive size, this portion of the powerline realignment would have a significant impact on the landform quality of the area. However, these impacts are considered not to be permanent, since the landfill surface would eventually hide much of the exposed pads and cut slopes of these powerlines, probably within about five years.

A variety of measures should be implemented to reduce the significant landform quality impact. The applicant should continue to coordinate with SDG&E to reduce the actual footprint needed for the powerlines. When comparing the existing pads that support the powerline towers, the area is less than ten percent of the size of these proposed pads. Though future powerline pole requirements would need to be accommodated and would increase the size of the pad dramatically, pad areas should be minimized to the maximum extent feasible. Additionally, extensive cut slopes should be permanently revegetated, rock-outcrops avoided and/or added to cut faces, and landform grading techniques used to blend the landfill in with adjacent landforms, as recommended and described in detail previously for other potentially significant landform impacts. With mitigation implementation, the significant landform quality impact would be reduced to below a level of significance.

#### Residual Impacts

Visual resources of the Gregory Canyon site would be significantly degraded by the proposed project. The project would not be able to meet the BLM VRM Class III objectives because it would create a strong contrast with the existing setting and impacts would be apparent to the casual observer from within the San Luis Rey, Rice Canyon and Couser viewsheds, as well as along SR 76.

Even though the level of contrast with the existing visual setting would be dramatic, the limited number of stationary viewers is substantially below the stated significance threshold of 1,000 viewers. Therefore, from a stationary viewer (primarily residential viewers) standpoint, the impact is considered adverse, but less than significant. The adverse impacts associated with visual quality, visual resources, view quality and neighborhood character would all be partially mitigable but would remain adverse because of the severity of contrast to the local scale and visual setting of the area. The adverse impacts associated with landform alteration would remain adverse since it is not possible to screen the landfill from all stationary viewers in the full viewshed. The landform impact is not considered significant to stationary viewers due to the limited number (less than 100) of residences and non-highway viewers in the area.

The landfill would significantly degrade views along a two-mile stretch of SR 76. Approximately 2,600 east-bound daytime drivers exist and another 2,800 west-bound daytime drivers would see a substantial portion of the project elements. The landfill would affect the visual scene of the area and would create a significant view quality impact. Views from the stretch of highway that run through the Gregory Canyon property would be screened by proposed mitigation that includes the use of large trees. All on-property areas next to the highway would be planted with screening. A few short segments would require special planting wells and slope containment structures to accommodate these plantings. Exhibit 4.13-17 indicates the locations of these plantings. Viewshed modeling indicates that with a 35-foot high vegetation screen at those locations along the highway, almost half of the acres of the landfill would be removed from the visibility of the highway viewer. Therefore, on-property screening, along with other mitigation described previously, would fully mitigate the significant view quality impact from the on-property segment of highway.



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Off-property landform quality impacts would remain significant. Though an extensive screening program could effectively screen the landfill and stockpiles from the highway viewer, unless the project proponent were able to obtain easements and approvals from other private property owners, as well as from Caltrans and the County of San Diego, this mitigation would not be feasible. As such, the significant landform quality impacts as seen from the off-property highway segments, would remain significant and unmitigable.

As discussed in Section 4.13.2, various thresholds exist for assessing potential aesthetics impacts from a project. As indicated in Section 4.13.2, for the purposes of this assessment, a significant impact is defined as a change to the visual environment that is visible to a moderate level of viewers (1,000 or more per day). This threshold was chosen as it provides a specific threshold and is therefore, less qualitative than CEQA Guidelines G or the County of San Diego criteria. Using the selected threshold of significance, the project would result in significant aesthetic impacts, all of which can be mitigated, with the exception of the landfill footprint viewed from SR 76 (i.e., adverse landform quality impact).

Using the CEQA Guidelines results in the same conclusion as the above. The proposed project elements would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista as there is no designated scenic vista. The project would not substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway as SR 76 is not a designated scenic highway. In addition, the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would affect day or nighttime views in the area because the operation would occur primarily during daytime hours and the night lighting is limited to what is necessary for security purposes (see Chapter 3). Views of the landfill footprint from SR 76 would however, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (i.e., adverse landform quality impact). Other project elements would be screened or are designed to blend in with the environment, such as the ancillary facilities being designed to be below the knoll.

Using the County criteria<sup>3</sup>, the proposed project elements would not result in any adverse impacts to aesthetics after the incorporation of mitigation measures. Specifically, the proposed project elements would not result in a physical change which is determined to be in substantial conflict with the character of the project area as defined by the approved community plan nor would the project result in a physical change which may preclude future compliance with the design criteria of the project area as defined by the approved design guidelines for the area. As discussed in Section 4.1, the project is consistent with the mixed-use character of the area and with other existing and planned commercial and industrial uses in the area. The project is consistent with the San Diego County General Plan. The project would not result in a physical change that would conflict with the Hillside Development Policy, Board of Supervisors Policy I-73 as the project is not considered hillside development. In addition, the project would not result in a physical change which will substantially affect the viewshed of a designated Scenic highway as SR 76 is not a designated scenic highway. Furthermore, the project would not result in a physical change which will substantially degrade the quality of an identified visual resource as there are no such resources identified in the project vicinity.

Therefore, applying the threshold used in the analysis the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds, the project would result in a significant aesthetic impact from the landfill footprint.

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<sup>3</sup> Since the preparation of the EIR the County Guidelines have been rescinded. However, this discussion has been provided in response to a comment received on the Draft EIR.

(The project would not cause any other significant visual impacts using these criteria.) Using the County thresholds of significance, the proposed project would not result in any adverse impacts to aesthetics.

#### **4.13.3.5 Site Closure Impacts**

The landfill project would utilize the canyon and area fill methodology for trash placement, and the final elevation of the last phase of the landfill and the highest point of the landfill would be 1,100 feet elevation. Similar to the surrounding and existing grade, the landfill would slope up from about 380 feet at the ancillary facilities area to the 1,100 feet and then slope downward to 950 feet at the southernmost point of the landfill as shown in Exhibit 3-17. At the highest elevation of the landfill, the landfill would rise approximately 200 feet above the grade immediately to the west but would be below the ridgeline of the mountain to the east. The landfill would be approximately 740 feet below the peak of the mountain, which is located at 1,844 feet. The landfill face and downdrains would be the most highly visible project components.

Section 4.13.3.4 (Project Element Impact Summary) indicates that once closure of the landfill were achieved and final cover were completed, a vegetative surface cover utilizing native plant species would be established. The visual simulations depict the conditions of the landfill during the post-closure period (i.e., 30+ years). At closure, the landfill would result in significant unmitigable landform quality impacts, and significant, but mitigable, visual resource impacts.

As part of post-closure maintenance, the landfill may be recontoured to repair any surface cracking, settlement and/or surficial slumping, as necessary. Such repairs could require the removal of vegetation and could be in any area that would be visible to travelers along SR 76 or adjacent residents. Any repairs and/or reconstruction activities to the final cover surface would be conducted and documented in accordance with the Construction Quality Assurance Plan for the final cover system, which is included as an appendix to the Joint Technical Document. Recontouring of the landfill surface would be done to match the approved final grading contours depicted in the Final Closure Plan. The repaired and/or reconstructed area would be revegetated immediately using the approved plant palette in the Final Closure Plan (see Table 3-5 for a plant species list). Therefore, such repair or recontouring of the landfill surface that may occur due to settlement or cracks during the post-closure maintenance period would not result in significant visual impacts since the recontoured area would match approved contours and the area would be revegetated immediately. A mitigation measure has been provided to ensure that the revegetation would occur.

#### **4.13.3.6 SDCWA Aqueduct Relocation Option**

A 150 foot wide area running 500 feet up the face of the hill directly west of the project footprint would be cleared of vegetation. This land disturbance would be visually evident for five to ten years after the completion of the relocation of the aqueduct, after which time the exposed soil would be revegetated by natural plant materials. The 12-foot wide access road servicing the aqueduct would be visually evident for an indefinite time. Ultimately, the visibility of the road would be similar to the visibility of the existing easement and associated access road. While the visual disturbance from the pipe realignment would be temporary, the access road would be considered a permanent visual impact.

The relocation of the aqueduct would have a significant visual quality impact. However, with implementation of mitigation measures similar to the measures required for the project, including landform grading, revegetation, color and texture matching efforts of the structures and vegetation, and designing portals and air vents to blend in with the landscape, significant visual quality impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance.

#### 4.13.4 MITIGATION MEASURES AND PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

##### Proposition C

Section 50 of Proposition C contains a mitigation measure requiring a landscape plan to mitigate potential visual impacts. Proposition C states as follows:

**MM4.13.C50:** *In order to mitigate visual impacts associated with the Project, the Applicant shall employ extensive use of landscaping emphasizing native vegetation, and rounding/undulation of slopes on the refuse column and changes in slope angles. All landscaping shall be performed by a licensed landscape architect in the State of California. This licensed architect shall prepare a detailed landscape plan designed to minimize visual impacts associated with the Project to the maximum feasible extent. The plan prepared [by] the licensed architect shall be implemented by the Applicant upon completion.*

##### Project Design Features

- Retention of the existing knoll north of the facilities area to help screen views of the site.

##### Impact and Mitigation

**Impact 4.13-1:** *The project would result in the following significant aesthetics impacts:*

PROJECT ELEMENT	AESTHETICS IMPACT AREA
<i>Bridge &amp; Channel Excavation</i>	<i>Visual Resources</i>
<i>Ancillary Facilities</i>	<i>Visual Character/Quality</i>
<i>Borrow/Stockpile Area B</i>	<i>Landform Quality; Visual Character/Quality</i>
<i>Borrow/Stockpile Area A</i>	<i>Landform Quality</i>
<i>Landfill</i>	<i>Landform Quality; Visual Character/Quality; Visual Resources</i>
<i>Tower Relocation</i>	<i>Landform Quality</i>

**MM 4.13-1:** As required by Proposition C, an overall conceptual landscape treatment plan shall be prepared by a licensed landscape architect and a qualified biologist incorporating the detailed measures for each project element as indicated in MM 4.13-2 through MM 4.13-10. The conceptual landscape plan is shown in Exhibit 4.13-18. The plan shall address the timing of the installation of each element. The elements shall be implemented so as to provide the necessary screening but also to allow efficient operation of the project. The landscape treatment plan shall be approved by the Department of Environmental Health prior to the operation of the landfill.

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**Impact 4.13-2:** *Based on the landfill's location with respect to landscape units with moderate to high visual quality and moderate to high sensitivity to change, the landfill would have a significant effect on the visual quality of the area.*

**MM 4.13-2a:** Existing trees and shrubs along SR 76 shall be saved and supplemented by like species and other fast growing trees to create a naturally landscaped transportation corridor through the property, where appropriate to screen the landfill. All on-site highway frontage along the south side of SR 76, shall be planted with a minimum 20-foot wide screen of native or indigenous trees and shrub species. The applicant's landscape architect shall verify to the County Department of Environmental Health in writing within two years of commencement of the landfill operation that this measure has been implemented.

**MM 4.13-2b:** Major tree groupings and transplants as well as native revegetation and rock outcrop placement shall be completed along the edges of the landfill. The placement shall not be too far out from the sides of the landfill, taking into consideration the drainage and settlement of the landfill. A transitional blending of the flat landfill face shall be undertaken along the bottom and perimeter edges where it meets the existing terrain. Large boulders and trees could be placed to resemble the ribbon of oak woodland impacted by the landfill. Tree groupings could be placed in groves below existing swales that contain oaks and sycamores. This extension of natural vegetation communities would help break the geometric lines of the landfill and would help the face blend with the surrounding hillsides. The applicant's landscape architect shall verify to the County Department of Environmental Health in writing after implemented as determined in the landscape plan.

**MM 4.13-2c:** Permanent slopes shall be stabilized with appropriate native plant seed mix and container stock around the edges. In some cases, where phasing may result in changes and/or transitions to the slopes, more temporary erosion control techniques could be utilized. The County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

**MM 4.13-2d:** Any landfill slope that would remain unchanged beyond one full year shall be hydroseeded or revegetated. Revegetation shall take into account the contrast, color, and texture so that it can blend back into the local setting. The County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

**MM 4.13-2e:** Drainage and methane extraction structures and pipes shall be painted or be made of materials that fit into the local color environment and that match adjacent textures. Painting of the structures, pipelines and other facilities associated with surface drainage, subsurface drainage and methane gas control would help blend them into the background of the areas that they are traversing. At the time of installation of the drainage and methane extraction structures and pipes, the operator shall provide a letter to the San Diego Air Pollution Control District and the County

Department of Environmental Health indicating that the measure has been implemented.

**MM 4.13-2f:** Brow ditches shall be constructed with outside bench lips slightly higher than inside edges. Culverts and other pipelines connecting brow ditches shall be painted to blend with landfill slopes. Integral or stained color shall be used on all brow ditches. A natural brown, beige or sand colored staining shall be used so that the ditch will not contrast with adjacent colors. Painting of miscellaneous structures shall use a variety of colors that match the revegetation patch and soil color that the pipeline is going through. At the time of installation of the brow ditches, culverts and pipelines, the operator shall provide a letter to the County Department of Environmental Health indicating that the measure has been implemented.

**MM 4.13-2g:** The applicant shall explore the feasibility of obtaining a landscape easement along SR 76 to the west of the site on the adjacent property or the Caltrans right-of-way as shown on Exhibit 4.13-17 of the Final EIR. The easement, if obtained, shall be planted with a screen of native or indigenous trees and shrub species to create a naturally landscaped transportation corridor similar to the screening on the project site. The landscaping shall provide screening of the landfill for drivers traveling west along SR 76 towards the site.

**Impact 4.13-3:** *The engineered landfill face would sharply contrast with surrounding natural landforms and would have a significant effect on the landform quality of the area.*

**MM 4.13-3:** The benches and lifts shall be graded to minimize the significant landform quality impact. Blending of created landforms with adjacent landforms can be achieved by manipulating the landform to resemble or meld with its surroundings, planting to create the pattern resembling the adjacent vegetation matrix and its colors, and incorporating boulders into the final grades to create the rocky texture of the surrounding hillsides. The County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

**Impact 4.13-4:** *The landfill would cause the loss of visual resources such as oak trees, native vegetation and rock outcrops in Gregory Canyon. Therefore, the landfill would have a significant effect on the visual resources of the area.*

**MM 4.13-4:** Areas within public view, such as along SR 76, adjacent to the facility area or within the abandoned Lucio Dairy parcels, shall be revegetated to mitigate for the loss of visual resources in accordance with the landscape plan (MM 4.13.1). The revegetation shall contain both oak woodland habitats and riparian plantings. Wherever possible, boulders and rock outcrops should be relocated from disturbed areas to replanted areas. The plan shall incorporate and compliment the mitigation for biological resources (Section 4.9). The revegetation shall be implemented within two years after the commencement of the landfill operation.

**Impact 4.13-5:** *The bridge construction and excavation of the river channel would result in the loss of major riparian trees, which is a significant impact to visual resources.*

**MM 4.13-5:** Large riparian trees along with the associated understory found within these riparian zones shall be planted along the access road and bridge to screen the project elements and the excavation in accordance with the landscape plan (MM 4.13.1). The plan shall incorporate and compliment the mitigation for biological resources (Section 4.9). Landscaping shall be installed immediately after completion of the access road and bridge and implementation of this measure shall be verified in writing to the County Department of Environmental Health by the applicant's landscape architect.

**Impact 4.13-6:** *Since the ancillary facilities do not appear to be part of the natural or agricultural character of the area, they would contrast and be visible to many of the SR 76 viewers. The ancillary facilities area would have a significant impact on the visual quality of the area.*

**MM 4.13-6a:** In consultation with the landfill engineer, rock outcrops removed from the landfill footprint shall be placed in strategic locations around the facilities area. Implementation of this measure shall occur after completion of the facilities area or in accordance with the landscape plan (MM 4.13.1). Completion of this measure shall be verified in writing to the County Department of Environmental Health by the applicant's landscape architect.

**MM 4.13-6b:** Areas adjacent to the ancillary facilities area and next to the water tank shall be planted with mature trees in major tree groupings to screen visual access to those structures. In addition, disturbed slopes shall be revegetated with native species. These concepts and the timing of implementation shall be incorporated into the landscape plan (MM 4.13.1). Completion of this measure shall be verified in writing to the County Department of Environmental Health by the applicant's landscape architect.

**MM 4.13-6c:** The facilities and miscellaneous structures shall be painted or be made of materials that fit into the local color environment and shall also match adjacent textures. Implementation shall be field verified by the County Department of Planning and Land Use—Building Division after construction of the facilities area.

**Impact 4.13-7:** *The western desilting basin would cut into the facing slope adjacent to the aqueduct area. This grading would constitute a potentially significant visual quality impact for SR 76 viewers.*

**MM 4.13-7:** Landscape plans shall include vegetative screening on the side slopes and in areas below the crest to hide the grading for the western desilting basin. Landscaping shall be installed after completion of the western desilting basin. The applicant's landscape architect shall verify in writing to the

County Department of Environmental Health that this measure has been implemented.

**Impact 4.13-8:** *Borrow/Stockpile Area A would be highly visible because of the difference in the overall size and form of the stockpile from the adjacent area, resulting in a significant impact on the landform quality of the area.*

**MM 4.13-8a:** Landform screening shall be implemented, including major tree groupings, at the edges of the Borrow/Stockpile Area A to help block the views of the area. The Department of Environmental Health shall field verify the implementation of this measure after commencement of operation.

**MM 4.13-8b:** The project grading plan shall include contouring of landforms to help blend the general forms of land masses on part of the lower stockpile areas. Gentle grading and curvilinear shapes shall be used to help blend top and side slopes in with the natural topography. Large, undifferentiated, flat slopes shall be avoided. The Department of Environmental Health shall field verify the implementation of this measure after commencement of operation.

**MM 4.13-8c:** After initial construction, Borrow/Stockpile Area A shall be revegetated. Contrast, texture, and color matching shall be achieved in all revegetation. All areas shall be replanted with native plant materials that will decrease the amount of value and color contrast with surrounding areas. The Department of Environmental Health shall field verify the implementation of this measure after commencement of operation.

**Impact 4.13-9:** *Borrow/Stockpile Area B would have a significant impact on visual quality and landform quality based on its visibility to SR 76 drivers, the contrast with the existing visual setting, and the overall size and form.*

**MM 4.13-9a:** The project grading plan shall include contouring of landforms to help blend the general forms of land mass on part of the upper stockpile areas. Gentle grading and curvilinear shapes shall be used to help blend top and side slopes in with the natural topography. Large, undifferentiated, flat slopes or pads shall be avoided. Leading edge landforms shall be created within the first two years of the creation of Borrow/Stockpile Area B to help block the views of the working face of the stockpile. The Department of Environmental Health shall field verify the implementation of this measure after commencement of use of Borrow/Stockpile Area B.

**MM 4.13-9b:** If a stockpile landform were to remain beyond one full year, the area shall be hydroseeded or other revegetation efforts undertaken. Contrast, texture, and color matching shall be achieved in all revegetation. All areas shall be replanted with native plant materials that will decrease the amount of value and color contrast with surrounding areas. Temporary revegetation of slopes shall also be used to reduce contrast, insofar as the proper colors and textures are utilized in the plant selection process. The Department of Environmental Health shall annually field verify the

implementation of this measure after commencement of use of Borrow/Stockpile Area B.

**MM 4.13-9c:** Landform screening shall be planted, including major tree groupings, at the edges of the Borrow/Stockpile Area B to screen the area from view. After installation as determined in the landscape plan (MM 4.13.1), the applicant's landscape architect shall verify implementation of this measure in writing to the Department of Environmental Health.

**Impact 4.13-10:** *The maintenance roads and graded pads associated with the relocation of the SDG&E towers would be visible to a number of highway viewers and would have a significant impact on the landform quality of the area.*

**MM 4.13-10:** In consultation with SDG&E, the applicant shall minimize the pad areas needed for the relocated powerline towers. Related cut slopes shall be permanently revegetated and landform grading techniques shall be used to blend the pads in with adjacent landforms. The cut face of these pads shall be sculpted to allow rock outcrops to remain and be prominent. Additional rock outcrops shall be placed where they do not interfere with the access and maintenance requirements of the towers. The applicant's landscape architect shall provide a letter to the County Department of Environmental Health verifying that these measures shall be implemented prior to the relocation of the towers.

**Impact 4.13-11:** *A visual impact could result if the landfill face were disturbed for necessary recontouring to repair any surface cracking, settlement, and/or surficial slumping. Such repair could result in the removal of vegetation.*

**MM 4.13-11:** If the landfill face is disturbed to repair any surface cracking, settlement, and/or surficial slumping, the area shall be recontoured to match the approved contours and the area shall be revegetated immediately, using the approved plant palette in the Final Closure Plan (see Table 3-5 of the EIR for a plant species list), after the completion of the repair work.

#### First San Diego Aqueduct Relocation Option

If the SDCWA Aqueduct were relocated, the following mitigation measure shall be incorporated:

**Impact 4.13-12:** *The relocation of the aqueduct and necessary vegetation clearance (within a potential 150-foot wide easement) would have a potentially significant visual quality impact.*

**MM 4.13-12a:** Disturbed areas shall be graded to blend the area with the existing landform. Gentle grading and curvilinear shapes shall be used to help blend slopes in with the natural topography. Large, undifferentiated, flat slopes or pads shall be avoided. The applicant's landscape architect shall provide plans to SDCWA for review and approval. County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

**MM 4.13-12b:** After construction, disturbed areas within and around the SDCWA aqueduct easement shall be revegetated with native species in accordance with an approved landscape treatment plan. County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

**MM 4.13-12c:** Aqueduct portals and air vents shall be designed to blend in with the landscape through the use of a variety of colors that match the revegetation patch and soil color that the facility is going through. County Department of Environmental Health shall field verify implementation of this measure.

#### **4.13.5 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

The project would have significant aesthetics impacts to visual resources, visual character/quality, and landform quality. Mitigation incorporated into the project includes landscaping to screen various project elements and to block views of the site from SR 76, placement of large natural boulders around structures, landscaping to cover bare earth areas, painting structures and pipelines to blend into natural colors and textures, staining of concrete for ditches and culverts, contouring graded areas to resemble or blend into adjacent natural topography, and other measures are described above in Section 4.13.4. These measures would reduce aesthetic impacts, and fully mitigate impacts from some project elements. Nevertheless, the aesthetic impact of the project, specifically from the landfill footprint, would remain significant and unmitigable even after the implementation of the measures contained in Section 4.13.4 above.