APPENDIX C
CEQA INITIAL STUDY/ MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

SUPER CREEK QUARRY EXPANSION: **REVISED BLM PLAN OF OPERATIONS AND AMENDED RECLAMATION PLAN NO.137**

Initial Study and Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration

California Department of Conservation
State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814-3528

June 2014

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SECTION 1. **Introduction**

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (as amended) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] Sections 21050 et seq.) and in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project evaluated in this IS/MND is the implementation of the Super Creek Quarry Expansion – Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137 (Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan). The Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan (January 2013) is included as Appendix A of the *Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137 Environmental Assessment and Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration* (June 2014).

This IS/MND evaluates the environmental effects of expansion of current mining operations and reclamation of the Super Creek Quarry, which is located in the City of Desert Hot Springs, Riverside County, near the town of Whitewater approximately 2 miles north of Interstate 10 (I-10). Upon approval by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB), the mining and reclamation plan will comply with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) of 1975. The SMGB is the CEQA lead agency for this IS/MND. The proposed quarry expansion will require BLM approval and therefore must meet the requirements for environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

I. INITIAL STUDY CONTENTS

This IS/MND contains the following sections:

- **Section 1: Introduction** – This section provides an overview of the Initial Study, a description of the CEQA review process and schedule for the proposed project, and CEQA lead agency contact information.
- **Section 2: Project Description** – This section describes the background of the proposed reclamation plan and ongoing vested mining operations, proposed project objectives, project elements, and required entitlements for project completion.
- **Section 3: Determination and Environmental Checklist** – The environmental checklist identifies environmental issue areas that could be affected by the proposed project and lists the determination of whether the project's effects on those areas are significant, less than significant with mitigation, less than significant, or have no impact. The checklist also contains the rationale and support for each determination.

  Section 3 also presents the determination that, based on the results of the environmental review, the SMGB has concluded that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent, and a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration will be prepared.

II. LEGAL AUTHORITY

This IS/MND has been prepared in accordance with CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(c) lists the following purposes of an initial study:

(1) Provide the lead agency with information to use as the basis for deciding whether to prepare an EIR or negative declaration;

(2) Enable an applicant or lead agency to modify a project, mitigating adverse impacts before an EIR is prepared, thereby enabling the project to qualify for a negative declaration;

(3) Assist in the preparation of an EIR, if one is required;

(4) Facilitate environmental assessment early in the design of a project;

(5) Provide documentation of the factual basis for the finding in a negative declaration that a project will not have a significant effect on the environment;

(6) Eliminate unnecessary EIRs; and

(7) Determine whether a previously prepared EIR could be used with the project.

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(b) (Results):

(1) If the agency determines that there is substantial evidence that any aspect of the project, either individually or cumulatively, may cause a significant effect on the environment, regardless of whether the overall effect of the project is adverse or beneficial, the lead agency shall do one of the following:

(A) Prepare an EIR, or

(B) Use a previously prepared EIR which the lead agency determines would adequately analyze the project at hand, or

(C) Determine, pursuant to a program EIR, tiering, or another appropriate process, which of a project's effects were adequately examined by an earlier EIR or negative declaration.

As CEQA lead agency for the Super Creek Quarry Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan, the SMGB has prepared this initial study checklist to determine the level of environmental review necessary for the proposed project. The SMGB has determined that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent.

III. PUBLIC REVIEW

In accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, a 30-day public review period for this IS/MND commenced on July 1, 2014, and will conclude on July 30, 2014. This IS/MND has been distributed to interested or involved public agencies, organizations, and private individuals for review. In addition, the IS/MND is available for general public review at:

State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-1082

http://conservation.ca.gov/smgb/Pages/Index.aspx

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262
(760) 833-7100

http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/palmsprings/national_environmental.html

During the public review period, the public will have an opportunity to provide written comments on the information contained in this IS/MND. The public comments on the IS/MND and responses to public comments will be incorporated into a final IS/MND.

In reviewing this IS/MND, affected public agencies and interested members of the public should focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing potential project impacts on the environment. This is particularly true for impacts found to be "less than significant" or "less than significant with mitigation" or where the Initial Study finds "no impact" for a particular issue area.

Comments on this IS/MND should be submitted in writing prior to the end of the 30-day public review period and must be postmarked by July 30, 2014. Please submit written comments to:

Will Arcand, Senior Engineering Geologist
State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814-3528
Will.Arcand@conservation.ca.gov

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SECTION 2. **Project Description**

I. PROJECT TITLE

Super Creek Quarry Expansion – Revised Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137

II. LEAD AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS

State Mining and Geology Board
801 K Street, Suite 2015
Sacramento, CA 95814-3528

III. CONTACT PERSON AND PHONE NUMBER

Will Arcand, Senior Engineering Geologist
(916) 322-1082

IV. PROJECT LOCATION

City of Desert Hot Springs, Riverside County, California, on public lands under BLM management in Section 36, T2S, R2E SBBM

V. PROJECT SPONSOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS

Painted Hills Mining Company
58645 Old Highway 60
Whitewater, CA 92282

VI. GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

City of Desert Hot Springs: Open Space/Mountain Reserve

VII. ZONING

Not applicable

VIII. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Project Location and Regional Setting

The Super Creek Quarry is located on public lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM approximately 2 miles north of I-10, east of the Whitewater River in the far western portion of the City of Desert Hot Springs in Riverside County (Figure 1). The quarry is situated on up to 10 placer and lode mining claims controlled by Painted Hills Mining Company (Painted Hills) in Section 36, Township 2 South, Range 3 East, SBBM and in assessor's parcel number 514-260-012. Land use is exclusively mining of decorative rock reserves. The existing quarry site has been disturbed by ongoing mining activities; however, the proposed quarry expansion areas are mostly undisturbed. The quarry's retail site is situated along I-10 in Whitewater. Access from the retail site to the quarry is currently, and will continue to be, provided by an existing BLM right-of-way (CA-22568) dirt haul road (Figure 2).

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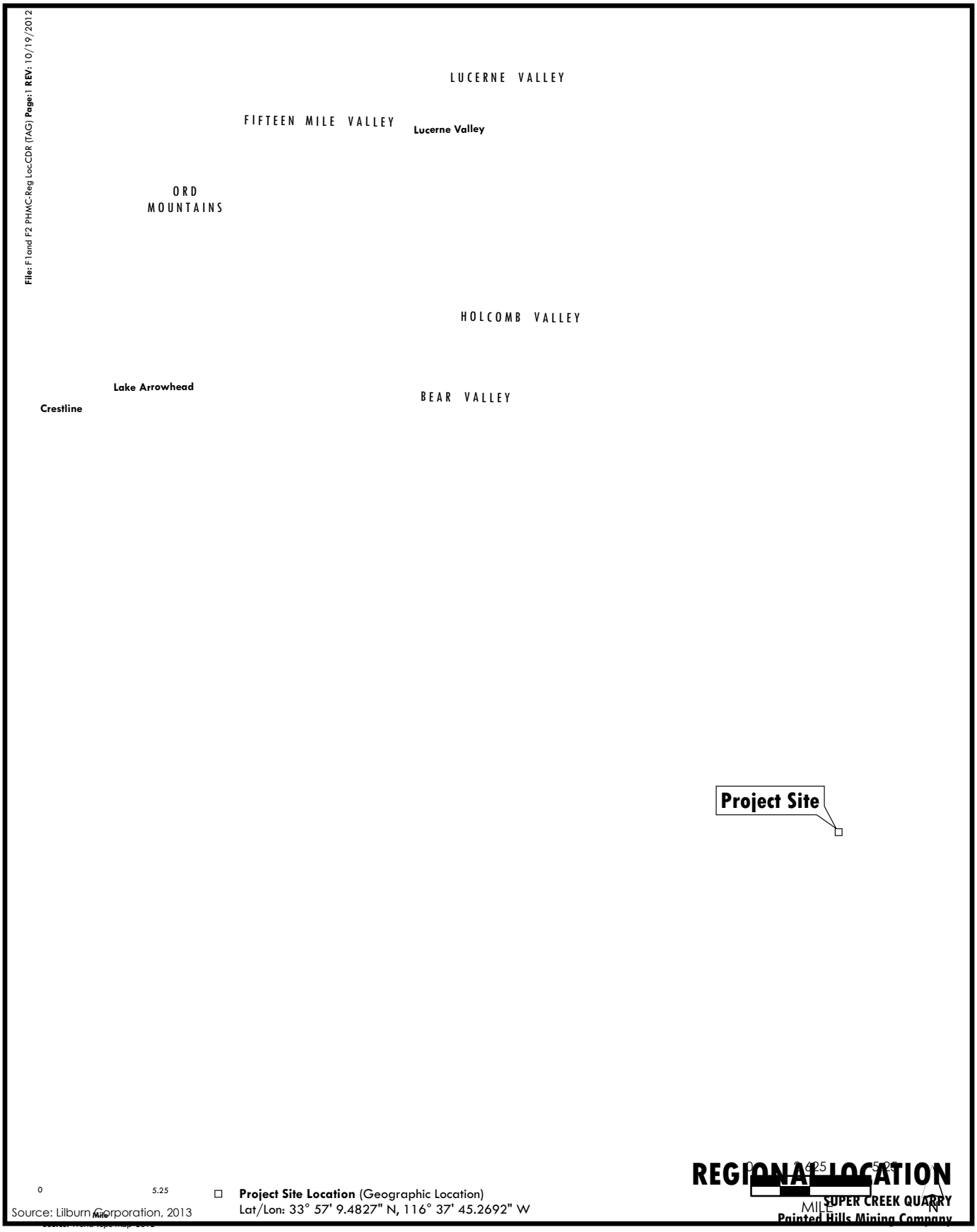

Figure 1

Regional Location

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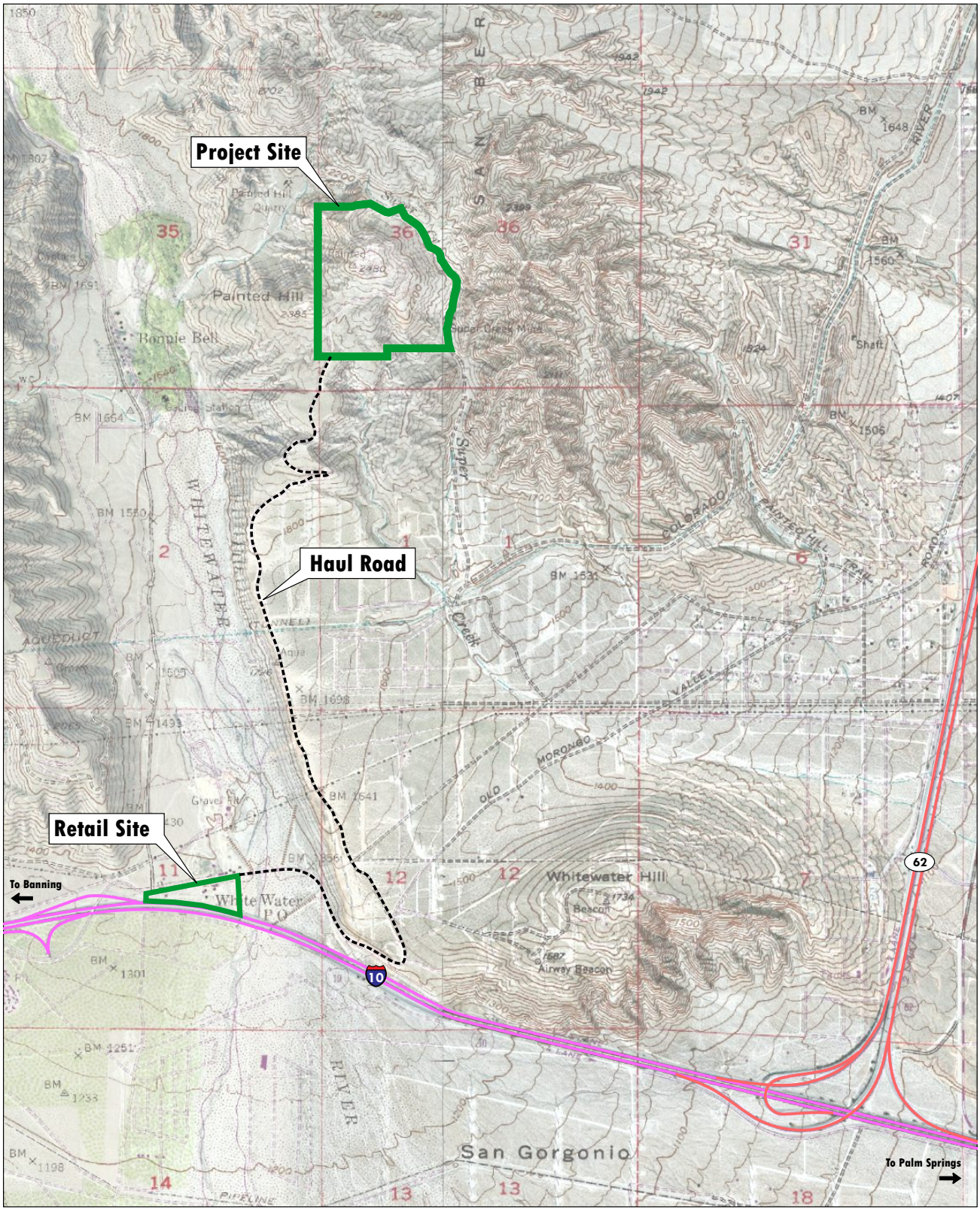

Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 2
Project Vicinity

Super Creek is a desert drainage that adjoins the project site on the north and east. The Whitewater River is situated approximately 0.5 mile to the west and is within the Whitewater Canyon Reserve. The reserve boundaries do not extend to the project site. Numerous wind turbines used to generate electricity are located south and east of the project site along the mine's access road. The closest residence to the quarry is located approximately 1 mile to the southwest on Whitewater Canyon Road in the community of Bonnie Bell.

The quarry is within the planning area for the California Desert Conservation Area Plan (CDCA Plan) and the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). Mining activity is monitored by the BLM under its regulations and the CDCA Plan. The CVMSHCP is a regional multi-agency conservation plan that provides for the long-term conservation of ecological diversity in the Coachella Valley region of Riverside County. The Super Creek watershed is within the Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon Conservation Area.

Project Background

Painted Hills Mining Company (Painted Hills) currently operates the Super Creek Quarry (CA ID#91-33-0003) on federal lands managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Super Creek Quarry (previously known as Painted Hills Mine) has been in operation since the 1950s prior to enactment of the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). The quarry is a source of decorative rock known as "Palm Springs Gold." Current mining and processing operations are located on approximately 23.8 acres of the Super Creek Quarry site. Inactive waste material slopes cover approximately 27 acres on the east side of the site. Sidecasting of waste on the east slopes ceased in March 2008. Reclamation of these slopes has been initiated in accordance with the approved reclamation plan (Reclamation Plan No. 137 [CA ID #91-33-0003]). Figure 3 shows the extent of current quarry operations and the areas proposed for quarry expansion.

Historically, the rate of mineral extraction at the Super Creek Quarry has varied from year to year, primarily due to fluctuations in market conditions. On average, however, approximately 50,000 tons of material is excavated and processed at the quarry. Of this amount, approximately 25,000 tons is waste material that would remain on-site and 25,000 tons is saleable rock that is transported off-site.

Painted Hills is rapidly approaching exhaustion of locatable materials that can be extracted under its current plan of operations and reclamation plan at the Super Creek Quarry. In January 2013, Painted Hills submitted the Super Creek Quarry Expansion – Revised Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137 (Plan of Operations) to the BLM and the California State Mining and Geology Board.

Project Objectives

The intent of SMARA is to "maintain an effective and comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy with regulation of surface mining operations so as to assure that (a) adverse environmental effects are prevented or minimized and that mined lands are reclaimed to a usable condition which is readily adaptable for alternative uses; (b) the production and conservation of minerals are encouraged, while giving consideration to values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, and aesthetic enjoyment; and (c) residual hazards to the public health and safety are eliminated."

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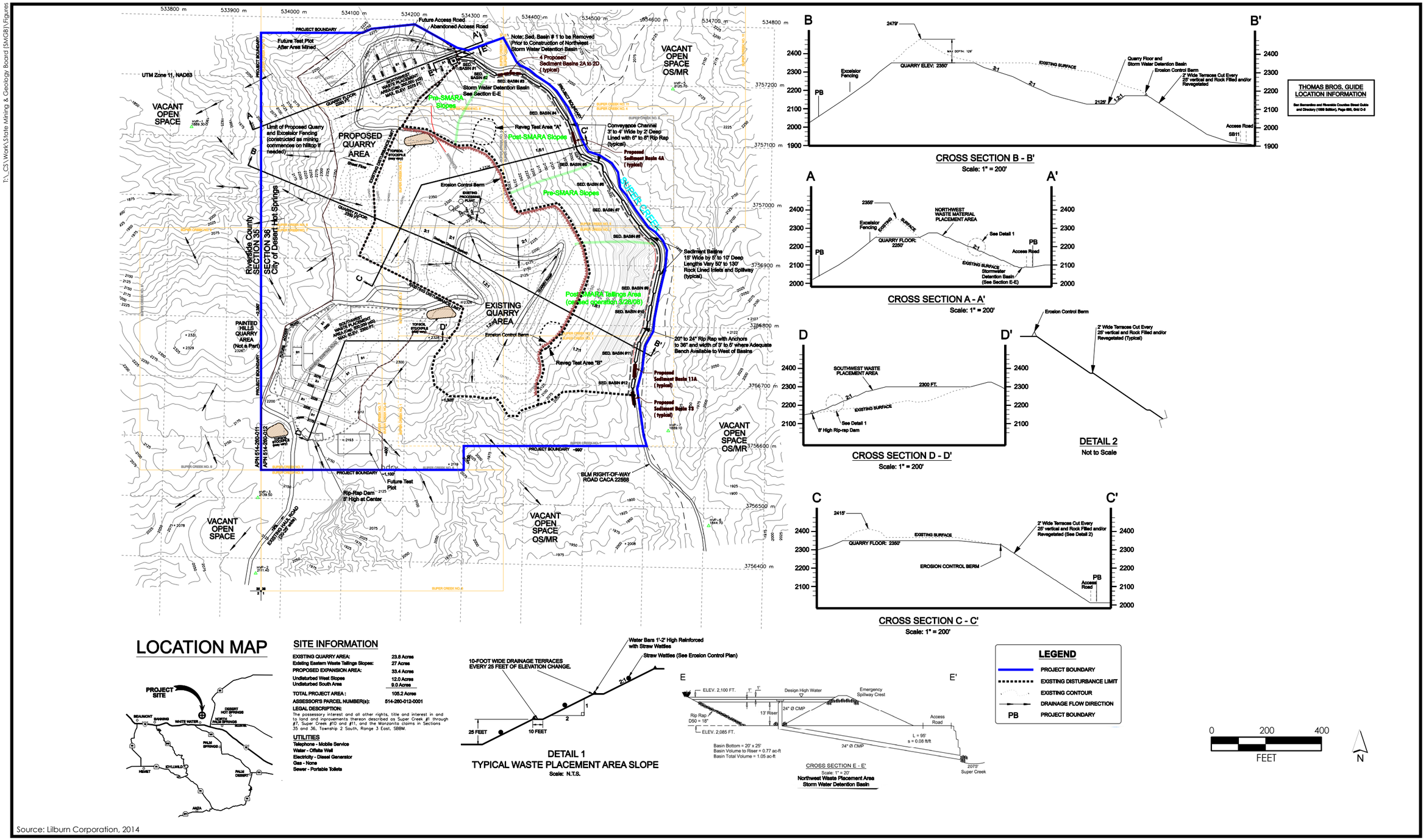

Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2014

Figure 3

Excavation Plan from the Plan of Operations

The SMGB reclamation regulations (Title 14, California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 3700) state the following: "Reclamation of mined lands shall be implemented in conformance with standards in this Article (Reclamation Standards)." The standards shall apply to each surface mining operation to the extent that:

(1) They are consistent with required mitigation identified in conformance with CEQA; and
(2) They are consistent with the planned or actual subsequent use or uses of the mining site.

The objectives of the proposed project are to (1) continue operations at the quarry for approximately 25 years; and (2) reclaim the expanded quarry site in a manner consistent with SMARA requirements.

The Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan implements the standards of SMARA (PRC Section 2773) for both content and performance standards, including specifically Article 9 (Reclamation Standards), as contained in 14 CCR Sections 3700 through 3711. Standards applicable to this application include Sections 3702, 3704(c–g), 3705, 3706, 3709, 3710(a), and 3711. Those standards defined as inapplicable include Sections 3703, 3704(a–b), 3704.1, 3707, 3708, 3710(b–d), 3712, and 3713.

Project Overview

Under the proposed Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan, Painted Hills would expand the quarry site, establish new waste placement areas, construct additional sedimentation basins, and amend its current reclamation plan to accommodate these changes in accordance with SMARA. Operations at the quarry would be conducted in phases and would continue for approximately 25 years.

The expanded mining area, new waste placement areas, and the placement of additional sedimentation basins would add approximately 33.4 acres to the project site. In addition, 21 acres along the west and south boundaries would be added to the quarry site that would remain undisturbed. In total, the expanded quarry site would cover 105.2 acres. Table 1 lists the acreages of existing quarry operations and expanded acreages.

Table 1: Existing and Proposed Quarry Areas (Acres) Super Creek Quarry

	Quarry Area	*East Tailings Slopes (including existing basins & channels)*	*Undisturbed Areas*[1]	*Total Area*
Current Mine Site	23.8	27	—	50.8
Proposed Expansion	33.4[2]	0	21	54.4
Total Project Area	**57.2**	**27**	**21**	**105.2**

Source: Table ES-1 – Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137. January 2013.

[1] These areas are to the west and south of the proposed quarry expansion and will not be mined or otherwise impacted, but may experience some boulder roll-down. Erosion control methods are planned as necessary.

[2] Includes approximately one acre of additional basin and discharge pipeline from the Northwest Waste Placement Area.

The method and rate of extraction would not change relative to current quarry operations. In addition, no substantive changes to the processing, transport, or sale of material are proposed. Painted Hills would continue to excavate, crush, and sort decorative rock on the quarry site. In keeping with current practice, processed rock would be transported from the quarry to the company's retail site approximately 2 miles to the southwest via a dirt access road with BLM right-of-way (CA-22568).

Proposed Mining and Processing Activities

Under the proposed Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan, Painted Hills would continue to use mining methods historically used at the quarry site, but would expand those operations into areas not included in current plan of operations and reclamation plan. Painted Hills would develop five main features within the expanded quarry site. These features, which are shown in Figure 3, are:

- northwest hilltop quarry;
- west central hilltop quarry;
- southeastern pit area;
- Northwest Waste Placement Area; and
- Southwest Waste Placement Area.

Due to the rocky nature of the topography, there is very little vegetation and overburden to be removed. As the proposed mining expansion area is incrementally expanded, any growth media would be stockpiled at up to three designated topsoil stockpile areas located near the quarry access road for subsequent use in reclamation activities, as shown in Figure 3. This stockpiled material would be covered with coarse aggregate or planted with a native vegetative cover as needed to prevent wind/water erosion. Any overburden waste rock encountered would be deposited into either the Northwest Waste Placement Area or the Southwest Waste Placement Area.

The mining of the decorative rock material would continue to be performed with dozers, excavators, and front-end loaders using a "standard hillside and open pit method." Using this method, material is ripped and pushed into raw stockpiles using an appropriately sized dozer. Front-end loaders or haul trucks then transport the raw material from the raw stockpiles to the on-site processing plant.

Raw material is processed using two small portable crushing and dry screening plants at the quarry site. This is the only type of ore processing that would be used throughout the 25-year life of the project. The existing portable crushing and screening plant equipment consists of a primary jaw crusher and a double-deck screen, a cone crusher and a triple-deck screen, and assorted conveyors. The jaw crushing/screening plant is a mobile track-mounted unit that can be relocated to wherever the active excavation area is at any one time. The raw material is fed through the portable crusher and screened to produce the three-inch-minus (3" minus) "Palm Springs Gold" raw product. The 3" minus material is processed through a triple-deck screening plant and cone crusher to make the finished products for truck transport to Painted Hills' stock yard. All other material that results from the crushing/screening operation is considered waste and would be deposited into one of the two designated waste placement areas. No washing of material is required or proposed. Chemicals or other hazardous materials are not required during processing of materials at this site.

The existing BLM right-of-way unpaved haul road would continue to be used for access to the quarry site. This export rate would result in an average of five to eight daily truck trips utilizing 20-ton over-the-road haul trucks operating on a five-day workweek. Peak truck traffic may be slightly higher at times; however, this would be a rare occurrence. The total weight (volume) of material to be extracted over the

25-year project life would be approximately 1.25 million tons (750,000 banked cubic yards [bcy]) including approximately 625,000 tons (417,000 bcy or 584,000 loose cubic yards [lcy]) of waste material, which would remain on-site in the two designated waste placement areas.

Equipment

Existing and planned operations at the Super Creek Quarry utilize a variety of mobile and portable equipment to excavate, process, and transport material. A complete equipment list is included in the proposed Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan. Mobile equipment includes a variety of trucks, loaders, dozers, graders, and excavators. Processing equipment includes a 250 kilowatt generator, two screen plants, a mobile crushing plant, and a 3-foot cone crusher. Some of this equipment serves as back-up and some is used at the stock yard adjacent to I-10. The current list of equipment is provided with the understanding that the types and models of equipment would change due to replacement of old equipment and compliance with new diesel regulations.

Proposed Quarry Area Expansion

As illustrated in Figure 3, the new quarry areas would be mined to a maximum depth of approximately 130 feet in the hilltop area and approximately 150 feet in the pit area. The excavations would remove the top portion of two small hills to the west of, but contiguous with, the existing quarry operations. Excavations in the open pit area would follow the desired rock ore body to the east-southeast to form an open pit with 1.2H (horizontal):1V (vertical) slopes in bedrock to a depth of 2,125 feet above mean sea level (amsl).

The northwestern hill would be mined from approximately 2,355 feet amsl to a quarry elevation of 2,250 feet amsl. The west central hill would be mined from approximately 2,480 feet amsl to a quarry floor of approximately 6 acres at an elevation of 2,350 feet amsl. From this quarry elevation, slopes would be cut at 3H:1V, gradually steepening to 1.2H:1V to form an irregular-shaped pit floor of approximately 1 acre at 2,125 feet amsl in the southeastern portion of the site (see Cross Section B-B' on Figure 3). The total acreage of the proposed quarry, the Northwest and Southwest Waste Placement areas, and additional sediment basins would be approximately 57.2 acres.

All proposed excavations would adhere to the recommendations included within the Revised Slope Stability Investigation (see Appendix A: Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan - Appendices H-1, H-2, and H-3). These mining slopes are entirely in bedrock with a static factor of safety of over 3 and a seismic factor of safety of over 2.

Waste Placement Areas

The planned Northwest Waste Placement Area would be located on approximately 4 acres with a capacity of approximately 300,000 cubic yards (cy) (see Cross Section A-A' in Figure 3). The waste placement area would be developed with 2H:1V slopes with 10-foot-wide benches at 25-foot vertical intervals.

The slopes would be protected with water bars and straw wattles with water directed to rock-lined down drains. No runoff would be allowed to flow over these slopes. Upon final grading completion, the slopes would then be revegetated, as described in the revegetation plan described below.

In the southwestern portion of the site, waste material would be placed in the Southwest Waste Placement Area covering approximately 10 acres with a capacity of approximately 500,000 cubic yards. The existing access road through this area would be realigned as the area is developed. The waste placement area would be constructed with 2H:1V slopes with 10-foot-wide benches at 25-foot vertical intervals (see Cross Section D-D' in Figure 3). The slopes would be protected with water bars and straw wattles with water directed to rock-lined down drains. The lower drainage would be detained by a proposed riprap dam. No runoff would be allowed to flow onto these slopes. Upon final grading completion, the slopes would then be revegetated as described in the revegetation plan.

The construction of the two waste placement areas is described in detail in Appendix H-2 of the Plan of Operations (see Appendix A, page 23 under "Proposed Fill Slope Construction"), which includes recommendations to ensure that the waste placement area slopes are stable. These recommendations include the removal of all loose alluvial soils below the proposed slopes. In addition, fill would be placed, not dumped, and spread evenly in thin lifts with conventional heavy equipment. Moisture content should be at least 7 percent by weight, which is the typical post-plant moisture content of tailings, or as determined through laboratory testing. The addition of water during the placement process should facilitate compaction of the tailings.

Equipment Maintenance

The majority of any heavy equipment maintenance would be done off-site at Painted Hills' repair facility at its retail site; however, unplanned repairs or minor maintenance may occur at the quarry site if required. Any waste oil generated at the project site would be collected and transported for off-site disposal by approved methods via properly trained and licensed personnel.

Painted Hills maintains an existing Business Plan, hazardous materials inventory, and a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan, which include employee training, record keeping, preventive maintenance, and best management practices (BMPs). These plans are submitted to the Hazardous Materials Management Division, the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for Riverside County, which is responsible for regulating hazardous materials business plans and hazardous waste. Painted Hills would be required to update these plans as necessary to reflect operational changes.

Water Use

Water use at the quarry site is primarily for dust suppression activities. Water is applied to roads, active stockpiles, and active mining areas. In addition, water would be used on the waste placement areas to facilitate compaction. A 5,000-gallon water tank on-site feeds the water sprays on the screening plant. The amount of water used varies greatly depending on a variety of factors such as weather conditions and the quarry's rate of production. Historically, however, less than 4,000 gallons per day (less than 4 acre-feet per year) has been required. All water used at the quarry is taken at an off-site well located at Painted Hills' stock yard 3.5 miles south of the quarry. A water truck transports water to the project site daily as needed. Bottled drinking water is provided for employees and vendors.

Drainage Management and Erosion and Sedimentation Control

Water management and erosion and sedimentation control plans are described in detail in the Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan. The proposed project has been designed to prevent erosion

and/or sedimentation of adjacent properties due to on-site rainfall and runoff discharged from the project site. Velocity control devices would break up the area into small micro-drainages, allowing use of smaller control structures, greater infiltration rates, lowered erosion rates, and thus smaller sediment loads. Located on a hilltop, the quarry expansion area receives water flow only from precipitation that falls directly on the project site. The proposed quarry expansion would be carried out in a manner that would retain any on-site runoff within the excavation area. Erosion control measures (e.g., cross ditches, berms, waterbars, and straw wattles) are proposed where necessary to achieve this complete retention of runoff from the excavation areas. The proposed locations and design of these measures are shown in Figures 4 through 8.

Erosion control features would continue to be incorporated and maintained through final successful reclamation and would include revegetation and erosion control measures such as straw wattles across the slopes, water bars armored with wattles, excelsior fencing, and detention basins below the waste placement areas. These activities are designed to mitigate negative effects of erosion potentially caused by the proposed project.

Proposed on-site operations would continue to comply with a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges associated with industrial activities and would employ stormwater best management practices (BMPs). NPDES compliance includes the elimination of unauthorized non-stormwater discharges, preparation of a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP), the monitoring of stormwater discharge requirements, and annual reporting to the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

As mining proceeds, a central depression would be maintained to allow any on-site water flows to deposit sediments within the confines of the quarry expansion area. This enclosed depression area would be maintained until the quarry is mined to its final depth. Berming along the perimeter of the quarry expansion area would be used to supplement the retention of water flows on-site.

Key elements of the erosion and sediment control measures include sedimentation basin improvements and construction, riprap placement, top slope reduction, implementation of erosion control measures, and revegetation. These elements are described below.

Sedimentation Basins

Twelve sedimentation basins were constructed in November 2007 along the base of the East Tailings Slopes and west of the access road that is located west of Super Creek to collect and limit fines erosion and runoff from the quarry site. The access road along Super Creek is bermed adjacent to the creek, and the roadbed is angled inward toward the waste material slope. A drainage channel along the inside of the road intercepts runoff from the slopes and conveys flows downstream through a series of narrow detention basins and along the inside edge of the road to a point where the gradient flattens. The conveyance channel joins Super Creek at the road crossing located south of the southeastern project boundary.

The inflow and outflow areas of the basins and the connecting drainages have been armored with rock and riprap to slow flows from runoff from the waste placement areas and to capture sediment. The adjacent road provides easy access for the inspection and removal of accumulated sediment in the basins.

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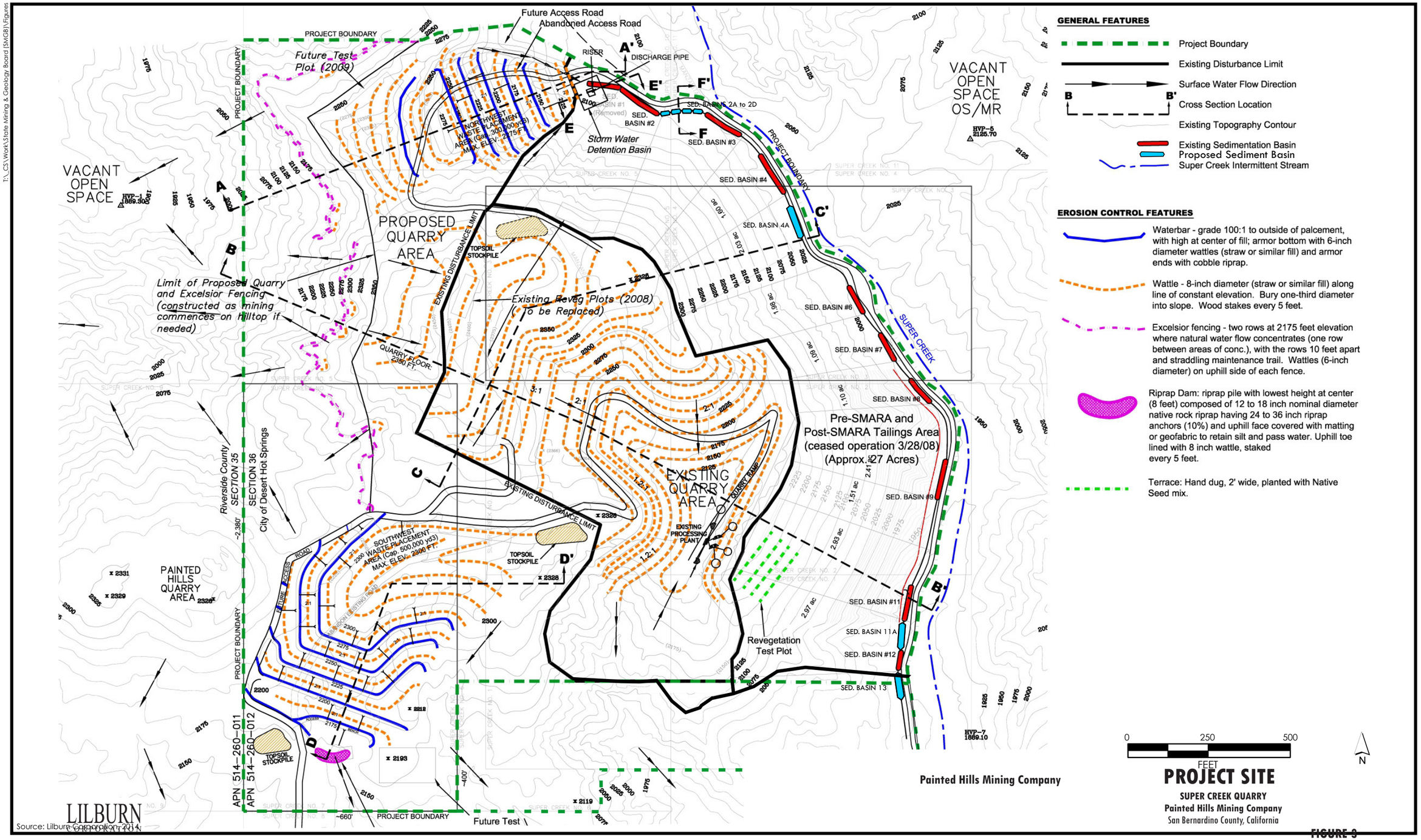
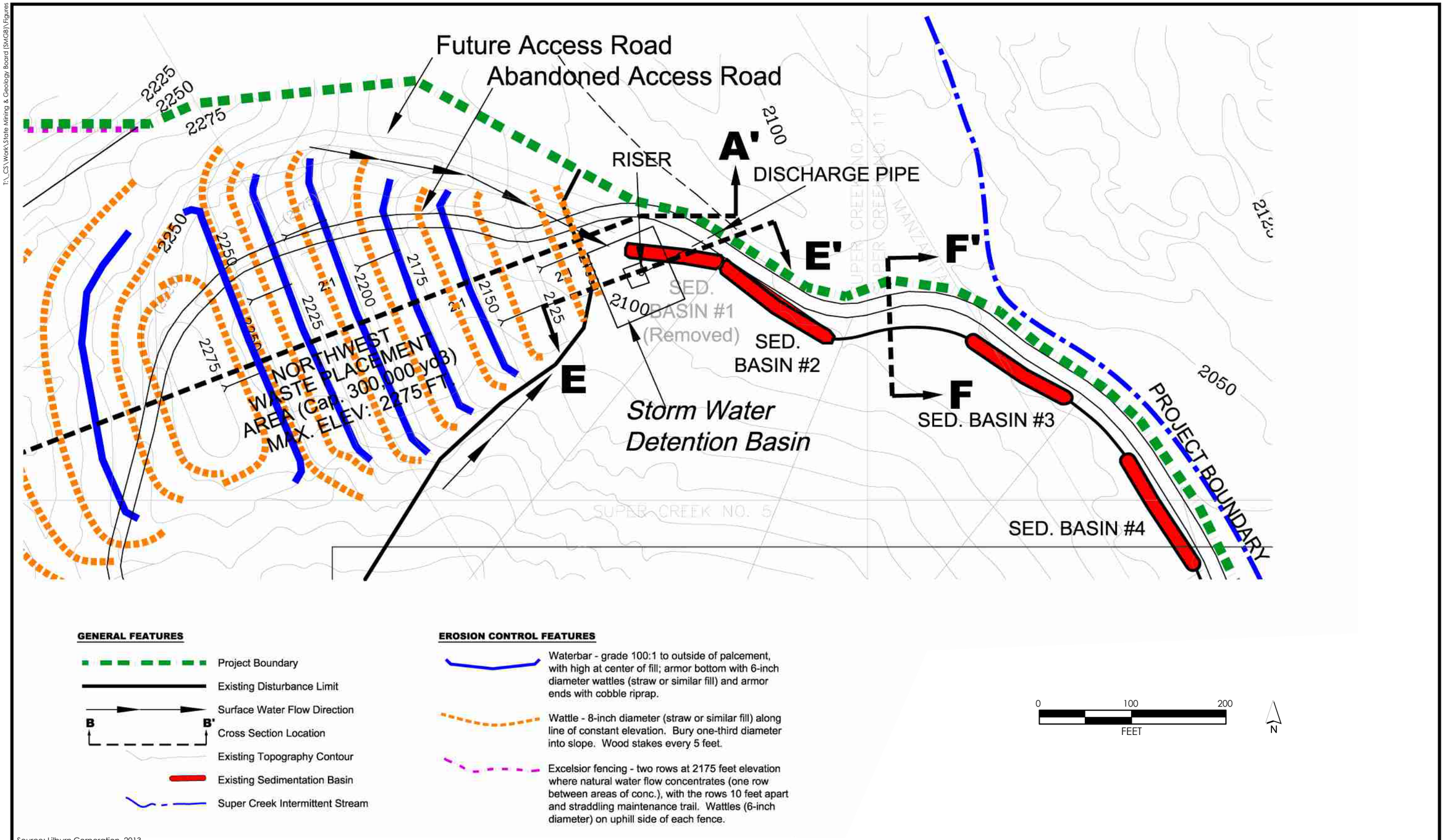
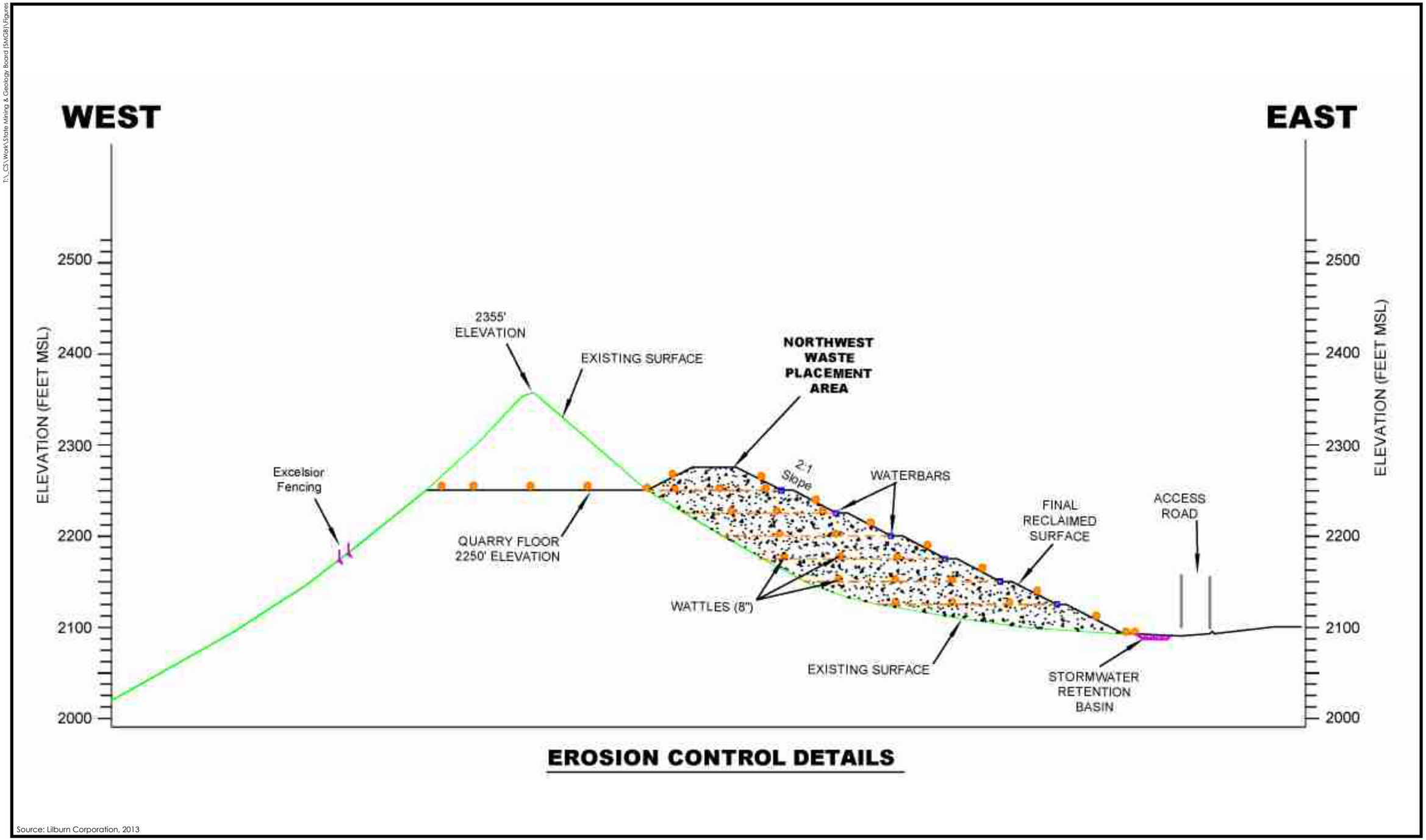


Figure 4
Project Site



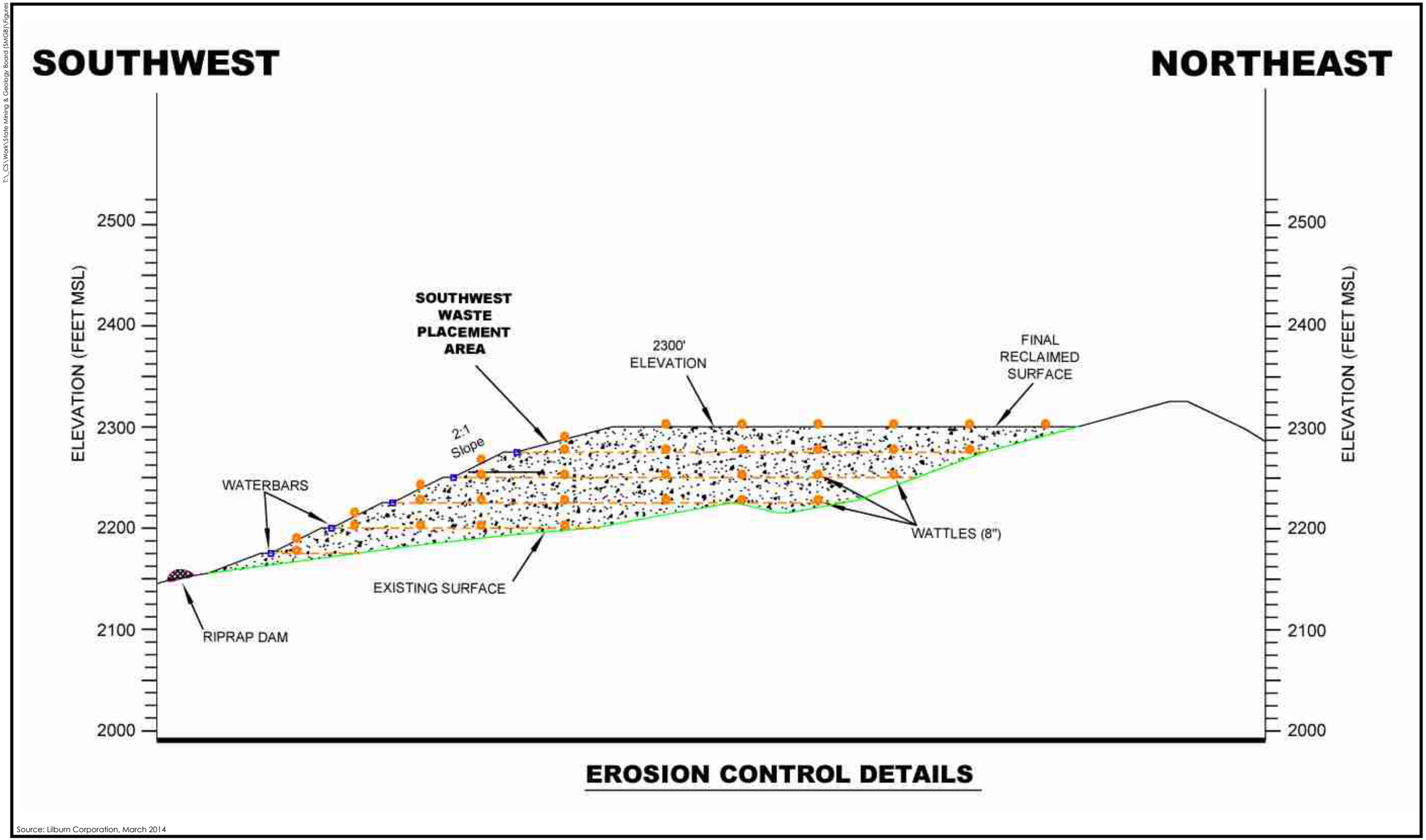
Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 5
Northwest Waste Placement Area



Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 6
Proposed North Quarry - Cross Section



Source: Lilburn Corporation, March 2014

Figure 7

Proposed Southwest Waste Placement Area - Cross Section

T:_CS\Work\State Mining & Geology Board (SMGB)\Figures

T:_CS\Work\State Mining & Geology Board (SMGB)\Figures

Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 8
Detail Existing Quarry

The capacity of the existing basins would be improved and maintained, and the conveyance channel connecting the basins would be improved. In addition, five new and two extended existing basins would be constructed for an additional capacity of approximately 0.66 acre-feet, providing a total capacity of 2.06 acre-feet. A typical cross section of the proposed sediment basins is shown in Figure 9.

Procedures for monitoring and maintaining the sediment basins during the life of the project would be implemented. Upon termination of operations in approximately 25 years, the slopes would be stabilized with vegetation. At that time, the basins would be filled to approximate original contours and revegetated.

Riprap Placement

Riprap ranging from less than 0.25 ton to 1.0 ton was previously placed along the base of the East Tailings Slopes where an adequate bench is present between the toe of the slope and the access road along Super Creek in accordance with the current reclamation plan. Where closely spaced, the riprap has reduced runoff velocity sufficiently to allow deposition of entrained sediment, which has promoted establishment of grasses and brush. In some locations, the riprap is too widely spaced. Additional riprap would be placed at these locations where an adequate bench is present and access to heavy equipment is available to carry out the placement.

Reducing Top of Slopes

Painted Hills uses an excavator and a crane with a rigged sled to remove excess fines from the top of the slopes to reduce erosion potential. A perimeter berm would be left in place to eliminate any future runoff down the face of the eastern slopes.

Erosion Control

Painted Hills has placed graded rock material or backfilled existing rills and gullies to break up concentrated flows and to reduce velocity within the gullies to decrease the erosion potential. The fill should also create a relatively stable surface to allow a foothold for vegetation establishment.

Revegetation

The approved Reclamation Plan calls for islands of vegetation to be developed on the slopes to reduce erosion. Painted Hills and its vegetation consultant have cut narrow horizontal benches or terraces a minimum of 2 to 3 feet wide at 25-foot intervals into the face of the slope. Where existing erosional rills are present, the benches were reinforced with rock riprap of appropriate size and/or straw wattles to limit further erosion. Under the proposed project, the benches would also be partially covered with rock and then seeded with the seed mix as described in the proposed amended reclamation plan. These benches, erosion, and revegetation would be monitored at least once per year and if continued erosion is evident, additional remediation measures would be undertaken. These may include the placing of additional riprap and straw wattles in lines where erosion is observed, construction of additional terraces, and reseeding.

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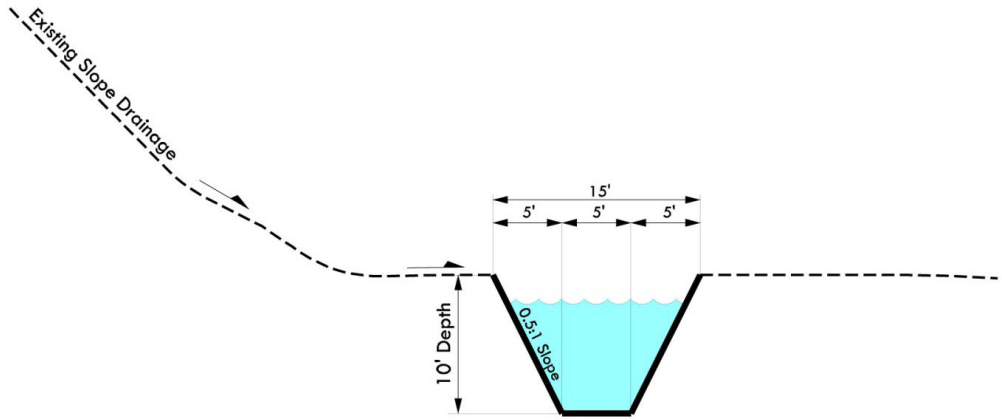
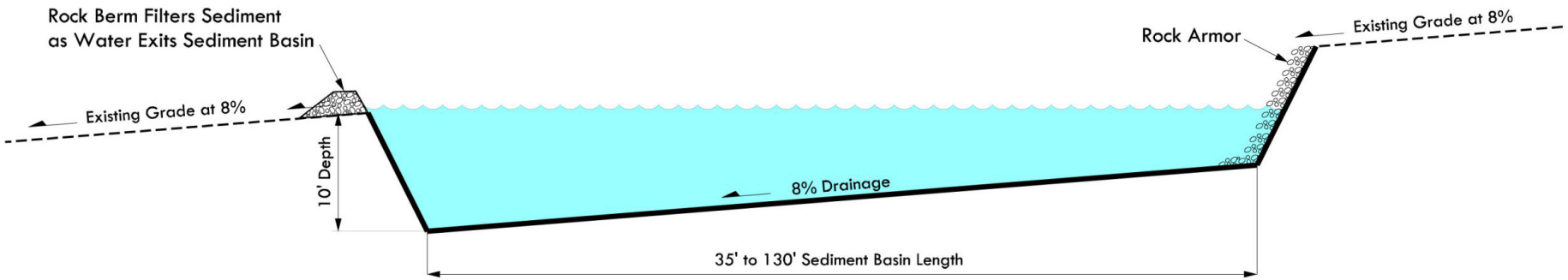
T:_CS\Work\State Mining & Geology Board (SMGB)\Figures



Typical Sediment Basin Cross Section

Super Creek Quarry

Not to Scale



Typical Sediment Basin

Super Creek Quarry

Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 9

Typical Sediment Basin

Spill Contingency Plan

Painted Hills maintains an existing Business Plan, a hazardous materials inventory, and a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan, which include employee training, record keeping, preventive maintenance, and BMPs.

Road Construction and Maintenance

The quarry site is located approximately 2 miles north of the existing building supply retail site located at 58645 Old Highway 60 Whitewater. Access between the quarry site and the retail site is currently, and would continue to be, a dirt and gravel haul road by an existing 50-foot-wide BLM right-of-way (CA-22568). The road averages 20 to 25 feet wide, and this width is adequate for two trucks to pass each other. There are no specific truck turn-outs. In addition, the haul trucks are able to communicate their location to other trucks and mine vehicles. The road is maintained in a safe and usable condition per right-of-way stipulations including blading, ditching, culvert installation, and surfacing. Swinging gates are located on the western and eastern road segments about 0.5 mile south of the quarry.

Utilities

Electrical power for the quarry site is supplied by on-site generators permitted through the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). No commercial power or infrastructure is available at the site. Sewage generated at the quarry is contained in portable restrooms. These would be serviced by a commercial provider and removed upon closure. No other utility services or infrastructure are currently available to the project site or proposed.

Reclamation Plan

The proposed plan for site reclamation is described in detail in *the Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137* (CA ID #91-33-0003), updated in January 2013. The Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan document is included in the EA-IS/MND as Appendix A.

Reclamation procedures would include (1) regrading of mined areas as necessary to achieve planned slopes; (2) implementing and maintaining erosion control features; (3) roughening the compacted surface to hold moisture; (4) adding any stockpiled surface material containing banked seeds and available silts; (5) seeding with native seeds; and (6) staking or flagging reclaimed areas to eliminate additional disturbance. Reclamation activities would be accomplished concurrently with the planned excavations. Roads not needed for site and quarry access would be stripped of any road base material, ripped, covered with available growth media, and revegetated.

The amended reclamation plan was prepared in compliance with SMARA. The reclaimed end use would be open space. Figure 10 shows areas of the project site subject to reclamation under the amended reclamation plan.

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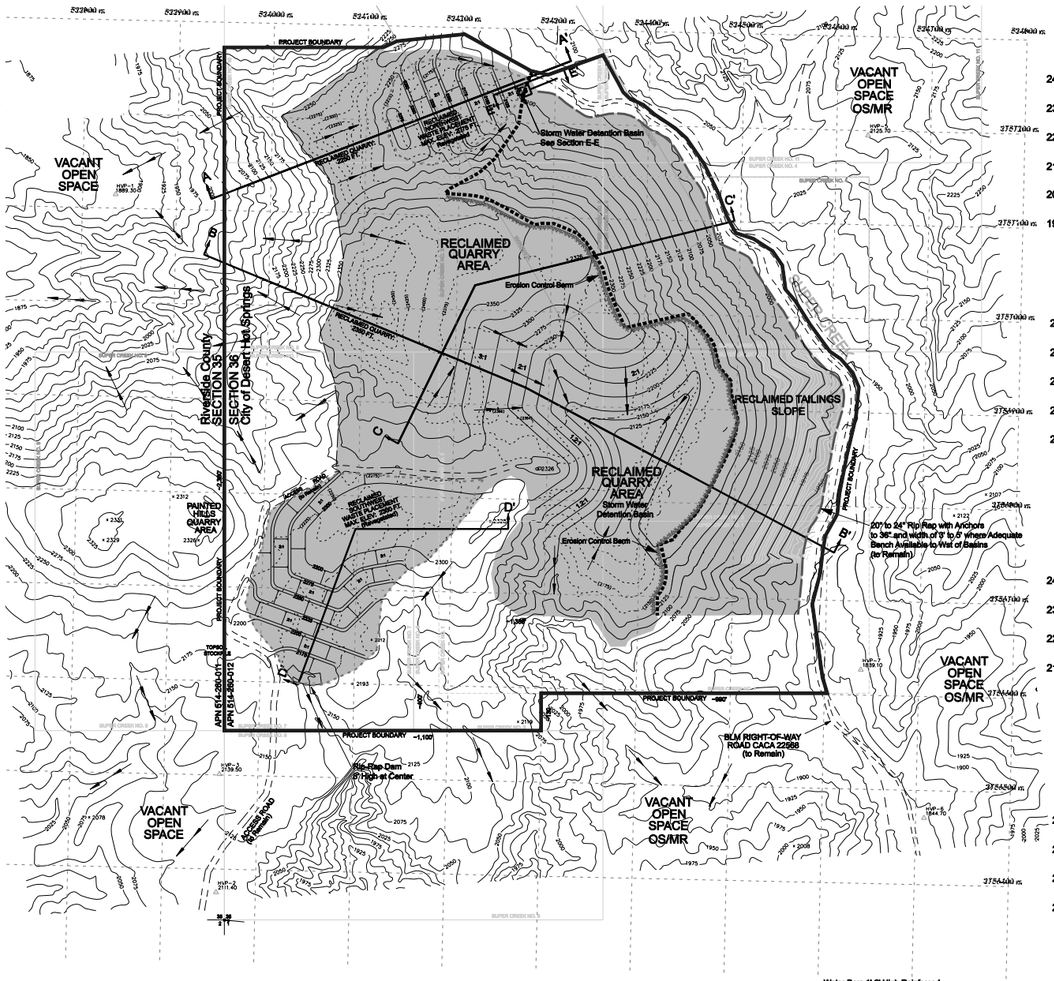
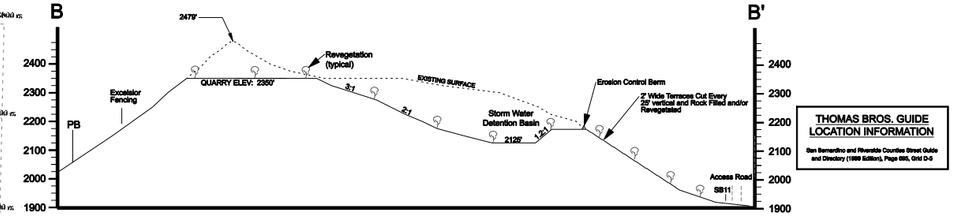
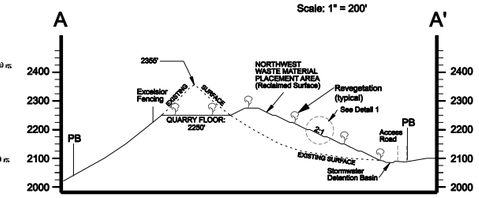
T:_CS\Work\State Mining & Geology Board (SMGB)\Figures





CROSS SECTION B - B'
Scale: 1" = 200'

THOMAS BROS. GUIDE LOCATION INFORMATION
San Bernardino and Riverside Counties Street Guide and Directory (1999 Edition), Page 880, Grid D-5



CROSS SECTION A - A'
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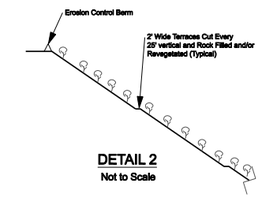
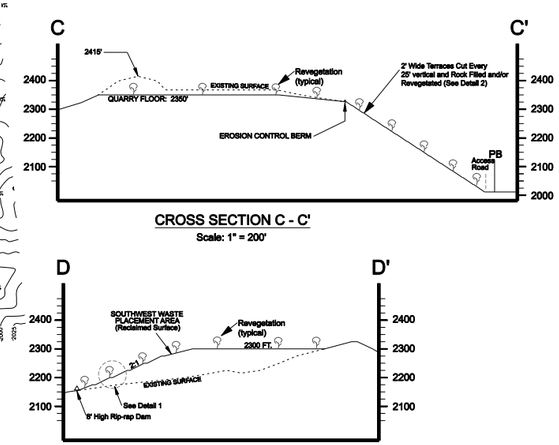


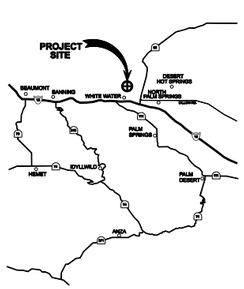
DETAIL 2
Not to Scale



CROSS SECTION C - C'
Scale: 1" = 200'

CROSS SECTION D - D'
Scale: 1" = 200'

LOCATION MAP



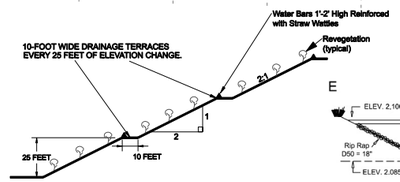
SITE INFORMATION

RECLAIMED QUARRY AREA:	68.2 Acres
Reclaimed Eastern Waste Tailings Slopes:	27 Acres
Undisturbed West Slopes	12 Acres
Undisturbed South Area	9 Acres
TOTAL PROJECT AREA :	106.2 Acres
ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER(s):	514-260-012-0001

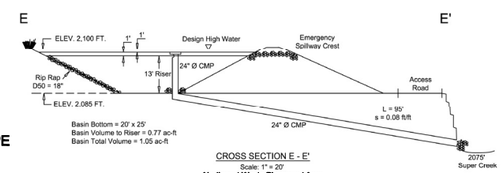
LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

The possessory interest and all other rights, title and interest in and to land and improvements thereon described as Super Creek #1 through #7, Super Creek #10 and #11, and the Manzanita claims in Sections 35 and 36, Township 2 South, Range 3 East, SBBM.

UTILITIES
Telephone - Mobile Service
Water - Offsite Well
Electricity - Diesel Generator
Gas - None
Sewer - Portable Toilets



DETAIL 1
TYPICAL WASTE PLACEMENT AREA SLOPE
Scale: N.T.S.



CROSS SECTION E - E'
Scale: 1" = 20'
Northwest Waste Placement Area
Storm Water Detention Basin

LEGEND

- PROJECT BOUNDARY
- QUARRY/TAILINGS BOUNDARY
- EXISTING CONTOUR
- DRAINAGE FLOW DIRECTION
- PB PROJECT BOUNDARY
- AREA TO BE RECLAIMED AND REVEGETATED (APPROXIMATELY 53 AC)

0 200 400
FEET

N

Source: Lilburn Corporation, 2013

Figure 10

Final Reclamation Plan from the Plan of Operations

The amended reclamation plan contains the following elements:

Regrading and Reshaping

All quarry slopes would be reclaimed to produce stable slopes as recommended in the Slope Stability Investigations (see Appendix A: Appendices H-1, H-2, and H-3), reducing the possibility of landslides, earth flows, or rock falls. All quarry cut slopes would be final-graded to no steeper than 1.2H:1V with all waste placement area slopes no steeper than 2H:1V. Grading, as well as the placement of berms at the crest of all project slopes would be completed in keeping with recommendations in the report entitled "Amended Erosion Control Designs" (see Attachment A as Appendix I-1) to prevent adverse impacts due to drainage from the toe of the fill slopes.

Wildlife Habitat Rehabilitation

Any restoration of wildlife habitat associated with reclamation of the project site would be accomplished solely through the implementation of the regrading, resoiling, and revegetation activities described in the Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan.

Topsoil Handling

There is no topsoil in the existing active quarry area; however, a thin veneer of topsoil covers portions of the proposed expansion area. Where suitable topsoil material is present, at least the first 12 inches would be cleared, used for concurrent reclamation if areas available, or stored for reclamation prior to expansion into the new excavation area.

Revegetation

As portions of the project site are mined to a finished grade and would not be disturbed by continuing project activities, revegetation activities would be implemented as described in detail in the Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan (Appendix A, page 43, under "13. Revegetation"). The areas to be reclaimed would be recontoured to final grades, ripped to a depth of at least 1 foot along the contour, covered in island patterns with available stockpiled topsoil material, and tilled to leave a rough surface. Broadcast seeding methods would be used to cover prepared surfaces using only seeds and seeding rates that have proven successful in the revegetation test plots. Table 2-2 lists the proposed seed mix.

Seeding would take place between November and January to take advantage of winter precipitation and to eliminate the need for irrigation. Reclaimed areas would be clearly staked and flagged to eliminate additional disturbance from ongoing operations. Annual monitoring and remediation as needed would be performed and would continue until the success criteria are achieved as discussed in greater detail in "Monitoring and Reporting Plans," below.

Table 2: Revegetation Seed Mix Super Creek Quarry

Common Name	*Latin Name*	*Lbs. of Pure Live Seed per Acre*
Creosote bush	*Larrea tridentata*	10
Burro bush	*Ambrosia dumosa*	4
California buckwheat	*Eriogonum fasciculatum*	4
Desert needlegrass	*Achnatherum speciosum*	4
Joint fir	*Ephedra nevadensis*	2
Brittlebush	*Encelia farinosa*	4
Deerweed	*Lotus scoparius*	2
Total		30
Source: Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137 CA ID #91-33-0003. Updated January 2013. Page 52.		

Removal or Stabilization of Structures

All cleanup operations would be conducted within one year of the termination of mining estimated for 2039. Project equipment not required for final reclamation activities would be removed from the site. Scrap material, refuse, unwanted equipment, and surplus materials would be removed and disposed of at an appropriate landfill site. Process plant facilities and equipment would be removed from the site. This would include dozers, loaders, crushing and screening plant, conveyors, etc.

Refuse in any form would not remain on the project site and would be appropriately disposed of in a permitted landfill. Excess material piles and disturbed areas would be regraded for positive drainage, scarified, and revegetated. The BLM right-of-way access under CA-22568 would be left in place unless otherwise directed by the BLM.

Post-Closure Management

Mine reclamation/revegetation would be monitored following final reclamation and revegetation annually until success criteria are met, as described below. Remediation of revegetated areas such as weeding and reseeding with different seed mixes would be conducted as necessary. This would result in formal closure and release of reclamation bonds.

Project Phasing

The general phasing and time frames of the proposed Super Creek Quarry expansion are listed below and are dependent on product demand and quality of rock found over time.

Phase 1 – Ongoing Excavations (Years 2014–2024)

The northwest area would be excavated with other areas excavated depending on market demand. Material processing and transport to the sales yard would continue. The Northwest Waste Placement Area would be developed. Sloping, erosion control, and revegetation of East Tailings Slopes and upper quarry slopes would be completed.

Phase 2 – Ongoing Excavation and Concurrent Reclamation (Years 2025–2039)

The west central area and southeastern pit would be excavated depending on market demand. Processing and transferring material to the sales yard would continue. The Southwest Waste Placement Area would be developed. Sloping, erosion control, and revegetation of East Tailings Slopes and upper quarry slopes would be completed.

Phase 3 – Operations Scheduled for Completion (2039–2040)

Mining excavations would cease. All mobile and portable plant equipment would be removed from the site except as needed for reclamation. Final recontouring would be implemented as required to meet approved design. Sedimentation basins at base of slope would be filled and revegetated. Revegetation activities on all quarry areas would continue, including any quarry roads.

Phases 4, 5, and 6 – Final Reclamation after Operations Cease (Years 2040–2049, or until success criteria are achieved)

All revegetation activities would be finalized and revegetation and substantial erosion remediated as necessary. Site revegetation would be monitored until success criteria are met. Final reclamation of all remaining unreclaimed quarry roads on-site would be completed.

Monitoring and Reporting Plans

Periodic reviews of project operations and reclamation monitoring would be conducted in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations authorizing operation. These procedures are:

1. Reclamation: Painted Hills would implement a maintenance program to ensure the success of the reclamation program. Throughout the life of the project, Painted Hills would continue to submit annual Mining Operation Reports to the California Department of Conservation Office of Mine Reclamation (OMR), the SMGB, and the BLM, as required by amendments to SMARA. In addition, the annual monitoring reports would assess existing conditions on-site including revegetation efforts, slope stability, slope erosion, drainage controls, and safety measures and would provide recommendations to improve and/or remediate any deficiencies in these areas.

2. Revegetation: Revegetation activities would be monitored annually during operations and following cessation of mining activities, until the established success criteria are met beginning one year after initial seeding or planting at any one site. All data would be recorded on a standard form and copies would be submitted as an appendix to each Annual Report.

3. Air Quality: The site's processing and power equipment are, and would be, operated under a permit from the SCAQMD with operations and permits inspected and renewed annually.

4. Surface Water Protection: Painted Hills would implement proposed inspection and maintenance procedures as well as the proposed erosion and sedimentation controls, which are incorporated into the updated SWPPP and listed in Section 14(d) of the Amended Reclamation Plan. Monitoring of slopes, erosion control, revegetation, and safety measures would also be accomplished by the BLM and SMGB staff as part of their annual SMARA inspection and reporting.

5. Slope Stability: Slope stability monitoring would be conducted annually as described in Sections 14(e) and 14(f) of the Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan.

6. Hazardous Materials: Painted Hills would maintain its existing Business Plan, hazardous materials inventory, and a SPCC, which include employee training, record keeping, preventive maintenance, and BMPs.

7. Financial Assurance: Prior to commencement of the expansion activities, an updated financial assurance cost estimate (FACE) mechanism would be approved by the BLM and the SMGB to guarantee proper and thorough reclamation of any additional disturbance on the project site. This assurance would be reviewed and adjusted as needed on an annual basis.

Other Public Agencies Whose Approval Is Required

The proposed quarry expansion will require BLM approval and therefore must meet the requirements for environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The amended reclamation plan also requires approval by the SMGB and is subject to review under CEQA. No other federal or state agency approvals are required, although it is anticipated other agencies may act as responsible and/or permitting agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (waters of the U.S. under Sections 401 and 404 of the federal Clean Water Act), Regional Water Quality Control Board (water quality certification under the authority of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, the state Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act, and stormwater permitting under the authority of the federal [NPDES program), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.).

SECTION 3. **Environmental Factors Potentially Affected**

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- ☐ Aesthetics
- ☐ Agriculture/Forestry Resources
- ☐ Air Quality
- ☐ Biological Resources
- ☐ Cultural Resources
- ☐ Geology/Soils
- ☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- ☐ Hazards/Hazardous Materials
- ☐ Hydrology/Water Quality
- ☐ Land Use/Planning
- ☐ Mineral Resources
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Population/Housing
- ☐ Public Services
- ☐ Recreation
- ☐ Transportation/Traffic
- ☐ Utilities/Service Systems
- ☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

SECTION 4. **Determination**

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- ☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- ☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- ☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "less than significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect (1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- ☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Signature	June 30, 2014 Date
Stephen M. Testa Name	Executive Officer Title

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SECTION 5. **Evaluation of Environmental Impacts**

I. EVALUATION PROCESS

1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from Section XVII, "Earlier Analyses," may be cross-referenced).
5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
   a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
   b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
   c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less Than Significant With Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.
6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
   a) The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question.
   b) The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

II. AESTHETICS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

CEQA Guidelines do not contain a specific definition of what constitutes a "scenic vista." What some may consider a scenic vista may not be considered that by others. Generally speaking, however, a scenic vista is defined as a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public.

The quarry area is only visible from certain viewpoints in the region due to the terrain and relative isolation of the project site. Views from four key observation points (KOPs) were evaluated to determine the extent to which the project site contributes scenic views. KOP1 is approximately 1 mile west of the site within the Whitewater basin just north of the small residential community of Bonnie Bell, where views of the two peaks to be excavated are a prominent feature of the landscape. KOP2 is approximately 2.5 miles southeast of the quarry at the intersection of Highway 62 and Dillon Road. KOP3 is approximately 6 miles east of the site near the eastbound Indian Avenue off-ramp just south of I-10. KOP4 is approximately 4 miles south of the quarry at the intersection of Tipton Road and Highway 111. Exposed rock surfaces and waste placement areas are visible.

Although no governmentally designated scenic vista or specific view spot has been identified in the project area, the site and its immediate surroundings are visible and may be perceived by some individuals as a valued landscape. When viewed from I-10 (KOP3), the mine site appears small and is of relatively little dimensional mass relative to the natural surroundings and wind farms due to its distance and size. The foothills with large dark gray forms comprising the larger mountain range to the north of the site and numerous wind farms dominate near- to long-range vistas. Views from Highway 62 (KOP2) and Highway 111 (KOP4) are similar. Visual changes at the project site due to mining could be noticeable, but they would not attract attention within the characteristic landscape. As such, the proposed project would not degrade any vistas that are observable by the general public. The impact is considered to be ***less than significant***. See Item II(c) for further analysis regarding how the visual quality of the project site would change relative to its surroundings.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014) Sections 3.1.8 and 4.1.8.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The quarry site does not appear within view of any designated state scenic highways; therefore, the proposed project would have ***no impact*** on scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014) Sections 3.1.8 and 4.1.8.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Changes in Visual Quality at the Project Site

The quarry would be expanded and new waste placement areas would be created. The two hilltops that are composed of bedrock would be mined, which would result in the lowering of the elevation of the northwest hilltop by 100 feet and at the west central hilltop by 130 feet. The visual effect of this would appear as a flattening of the hilltops along with the development of new quarry pits. The lower elevation of the mined hilltops would be a noticeable visual change in the immediate area of the project, which would occur gradually as mining progresses. In addition, tailings would be placed on existing slopes in the northwest and southwest waste placement areas, which would modify the existing slope and contour of those areas. While this would modify the slopes, the visual change in texture and color of the rock materials would be less apparent than the reduction in height of the two prominent hilltops. Because the proposed project would be a continuation of existing uses, it would not introduce new or substantially different visual elements that would degrade visual character within the site itself.

Changes in Visual Quality Relative to Surroundings

The site is relatively isolated and immediately surrounded by steep, rugged mountainous ridges and valleys. The Whitewater River is approximately 0.5 mile east of the site, and several wind energy generators are south and east of the site. Vacant open space comprises the remainder of the immediate vicinity around the project site. The nearest residential development is approximately 1 mile to the southwest, along Whitewater Canyon Road in the community of Bonnie Bell. Very sparse vegetation covers the slopes in the region, allowing the gray, green, and brown shades of the natural minerals to dominate local coloring.

The exposed surface of the Super Creek Quarry site contrasts with the surrounding region as the vegetation is removed and the brownish/red/gold decorative rock is exposed. In addition, the Southwest and Northwest Waste Placement Areas situated immediately below the area of excavation present a

distinct visual contrast between the active quarry and the surrounding terrain. The waste placement areas appear as unbroken expanses of light tan/yellow color amidst the grey, green, and brown shades of the surrounding terrain and the brown/red/gold of the quarry excavation. Despite being inactive since 2008, the waste treatment areas are relatively devoid of significant vegetation and are the most visually distinctive feature of the current quarry site from various distant viewpoints.

Changes in the visual quality of the project site relative to its surroundings from the KOPs were evaluated using the BLM Visual Resource Management System to determine the Visual Resource Inventory and Visual Resource Contrast Rating. The analysis is used to evaluate four elements: form, line, color, and texture. These elements of the landscape features at the current quarry site were compared to projected changes in landscape due to the proposed project to qualitatively determine a level of contrast between existing conditions and project conditions. The degree of contrast is characterized as either "strong," "moderate," "weak," or "none."

The proposed project would result in a moderate visual contrast at KOP1 (Bonnie Bell). The overall view of the eastern landscape from KOP1 consists of a gently sloping river basin that leads to the base of the San Bernardino Mountain Range foothills that form the eastern boundary of Whitewater Canyon. The foothills rise steeply approximately 600–800 feet above the river basin and are covered in sparse vegetation. The two peaks to be excavated under the proposed project are prominent from this view. The flattening of the two peaks would result in a moderate visual contrast in form. This contrast can be mitigated by rounding the tops of decorative rock extraction area slopes to decrease the contrasting edges of the disturbance. With implementation of the following mitigation measure, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

> ***MM-AES-1*** *At the completion of mining operations, the tops of decorative rock extraction area slopes shall be rounded to decrease the contrasting edges of the disturbance.*

At KOP2, KOP3, and KOP4, the change in contrast would be weak or none. At KOP 2 and KOP3, the contrast would actually decrease after completion of mining and reclamation compared to present-day contrast ratings. This decrease would result from the removal of exposed bed rock currently visible, the lowering of the top elevation of the East Tailings Slopes waste placement area, and the long-term reestablishment of vegetation on the tailings area, all of which would serve to reduce the current color contrast of the present day quarry site. At KOP4, the contrast would decrease due to the reduction in size of the East Tailings Slopes waste placement and the flattening of the existing peak in the center of the project site. The creation of the Southwest Waste Placement Area, however, would increase contrast by placing lighter-colored material on the southern exposure of the project site, in view of KOP4. The effects of the proposed project on the character of the landscape may be noticeable from these viewpoints, but they would not be expected to attract attention.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014) Sections 3.1.8, 4.1.4, and 4.1.8.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Existing and expanded quarry operations and reclamation is limited to heavy equipment use, which would not be a source of glare during daytime hours. There is no lighting at the quarry. There would be ***no impact***.

III. AGRICULTURE/FORESTRY RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
(a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site and adjoining lands are classified as "Other" under the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. There would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014) Section 3.1, Table 3-1.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or with a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is on land managed by the BLM. It is not zoned for agricultural uses, and there are no Williamson Act contracts. There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d) Result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to nonforest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is an existing quarry. There is no forestland or timberland on or adjacent to the site. There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forestland to nonforest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed project is the expansion of an existing quarry and reclamation on lands already disturbed by mining. There are no agricultural or forest uses. There would be ***no impact.***

IV. AIR QUALITY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
(a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is nonattainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions that exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The project site is located within the South Coast Air Basin (Basin), under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). The SCAQMD has ambient air quality monitoring

stations that measure ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxide (NO_X), sulfur oxide (SO_X), and particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) have established ambient air quality standards for common pollutants. If the pollutant exceeds the standard, the area is classified as a "nonattainment" area. The Basin is in nonattainment for ozone (1-hour and 8-hour) and PM_{10}.

The SCAQMD and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) are the agencies responsible for preparing the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) for the Basin. Once adopted, the AQMP becomes a portion of California's State Implementation Plan (SIP) describing the plan to bring the Basin into attainment with the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) and California ambient air quality standards (CAAQS). The most recent plan is the 2012 AQMP adopted on December 7, 2012. The 2012 AQMP is designed to meet the state and federal Clean Air Act planning requirements and focuses on new federal ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ standards.

Rock crushing, processing, and screening as well as hauling on dirt access roads within the project have the potential to create fugitive dust and vehicle emissions. CalEEMod was used to quantify operational emissions for criteria air pollutant emissions. The USEPA's AP 42 Section 13.2.2 Unpaved Roads was used to calculate fugitive emissions from haul truck traffic.

The analysis assumes in order to comply with the PM_{10} SIP and SCAQMD regulations, the site's processing and power equipment are and would continue to be operated under a permit to operate from the SCAQMD. Operations and permits are inspected and renewed annually. Haul trucks and diesel equipment must meet requirements of CARB's off-road diesel vehicles regulations to reduce diesel pollutants. Operations are required to comply with SCAQMD Rules 401 (limiting visible emissions from exhaust), 402 (avoid nuisance emissions), and 403 (overall fugitive dust control requirements). Water would be used on-site only for dust suppression activities. These include water spraying roads, active stockpiles, screening plant, and active mining areas. In addition to the operations and equipment compliance with the SCAQMD and CARB, the on-site diesel generator that provides electrical service for the existing crushing/screening plant is permitted with the SCAQMD (PTO #D30726). Reclamation of surface disturbance would gradually eliminate any potential for long-term effects on air resources.

The proposed expansion of the Super Creek Quarry would only increase the footprint of the quarry and would not change its operational and mining processes. Because the project would not generate any additional sources of pollutants and the daily emission levels would be the same as existing quarry operations, the expansion of the Super Creek Quarry would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the AQMP.

The proposed project would produce a maximum of 2 tons per year (tpy) of PM_{10}, 1 tpy of $PM_{2.5}$, 2 tpy of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and 14 tpy of NO_X emissions, after incorporating the reductions in pollutants due to required dust control measures such as watering of access roads and the screen plant. These emissions are below the federal standards for the specified pollutants and are already generated by existing quarry operations. Because there are no new annual emissions associated with the project, no further conformity or determination analysis is required. Further, because there would be no net increase in emissions, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of ozone or PM_{10}.

The proposed project would not result in a daily or annual increase in emissions. Additionally, due to its remote location, there are no sensitive receptors closer than 0.5 mile from the site. Daily traffic into and out of the site would not change. Therefore, the proposed project would not expose sensitive receptors in the area to substantial pollutant concentrations.

Air pollutant emissions impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would not create objectionable odors. The expansion and reclamation plan proposes to continue mining a type of decorative rock at the quarry expansion area site. The mining operations and equipment at the site would remain the same as the existing operations, and they would not result in any new odor sources. Impacts would be ***less than significant.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 4.1.4.*

V. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Special-Status Wildlife Species

A review of available data regarding the potential for sensitive wildlife species to occur on-site and a general biological resources survey determined that three sensitive wildlife species (desert tortoise, burrowing owl, and Le Conte's thrasher) could forage, find cover, or reproduce within the project area. Although no desert tortoise or desert tortoise sign was observed in the project area during focused protocol surveys, habitat in the area has the potential to support this species. Habitat with the potential to support burrowing owl occurs within the project area. Additionally, habitat at the site could provide suitable nesting and foraging opportunities for many avian species, including some raptors and migratory birds (other than burrowing owl). Raptors and raptor nests are considered to be a special resource by

federal and state agencies and are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the California Code of Regulations. All migratory birds are also protected under the MBTA. Project implementation could affect areas that could provide suitable habitat for these avian species. Incidental take or loss of these species through direct mortality or nest abandonment caused from project disturbance is considered a potentially significant impact.

With implementation of the following mitigation measure, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

MM-BIO-1 Desert Tortoise. *The following actions shall be implemented prior to and during expansion activities.*

- *An authorized biologist shall conduct a preconstruction desert tortoise clearance survey on undisturbed areas no more than 14 days prior to commencement of project activities within desert tortoise habitat. Any desert tortoise burrows within 50 yards of the proposed expansion area should be flagged for avoidance. If a desert tortoise is observed within 50 yards of the proposed expansion area, the BLM shall be contacted to determine whether additional protection measures are required.*
- *If burrows are found in the project area and avoidance zones marked with flags, all work activities shall be restricted to the limits of the flagged area.*
- *An authorized biologist shall conduct a desert tortoise educational program for personnel at the project site; the program should discuss measures to protect desert tortoise on-site.*
- *Workers shall be required to check for desert tortoise under all heavy equipment and vehicles prior to moving them.*
- *No firearms, dogs, or other pets shall be allowed in desert tortoise habitat within the project area.*
- *All trash and food items shall be promptly contained within closed, common raven-proofed containers and will be removed daily from the project site to reduce the attractiveness of the area to common ravens (Corvus corax).*
- *An on-call authorized desert tortoise biologist shall be employed to assist the site manager should any tortoise issues arise when previously undisturbed lands are cleared for project purposes.*

MM-BIO-2 Burrowing Owl. *To reduce potential effects on burrowing owl, mitigation measures and survey protocols outlined in the CDFW (2012) Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation shall be implemented by a qualified biologist. Mitigation methods can include actions to avoid take of owls or owl nests; perform preconstruction surveys; conduct site surveillance; minimize disturbance; establish restriction or avoidance buffers around occupied burrows; exclude and close abandoned burrows; translocate individuals; provide permanently protected replacement habitat; install artificial burrows; and design a mitigation monitoring and reporting plan. Ultimately, mitigation for this species should be roughly proportional to the level of impact. The authorized biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys following CDFW protocols and establish avoidance areas for any active burrows found within and adjacent to the project area. If burrowing owls are documented on-site, the biologist shall consult with the BLM regarding possible additional restrictions that would be necessary for project implementation.*

MM-BIO-3 Raptors and Migratory Birds, Including Le Conte's Thrasher. *A survey for active nests should be conducted prior to the onset of project activities on any lands not previously disturbed or left undisturbed for six months. If project activities are planned to begin during the nesting season for local avian species (typically March 15 to September 15), a qualified biologist shall conduct a focused survey for active nests of raptors and migratory birds, with special attention given to areas likely to support Le Conte's thrasher, within and in the vicinity (no less than 100 feet outside project boundaries, where possible) of disturbance areas no more than three days prior to the onset of activity. If an active nest is located during a survey, the USFWS and/or CDFW (depending on the regulatory status of the species) shall be notified regarding the status of the nest. Furthermore, project activities shall be restricted as necessary to avoid disturbance of the nest until it is abandoned or resource agencies deem the potential for abandonment (or loss of individuals) to be minimal. Restrictions may include establishment of exclusion zones (no ingress of personnel or equipment at a minimum radius, typically 100 feet or greater around the nest) or alteration of the project schedule. If no active nests are found during the survey, project activities may proceed without further restrictions (related to birds). No action is necessary if project activity will commence outside the breeding season (generally September 16 through March 14).*

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.10 and 4.1.10.*

Special-Status Plant Species

Focused surveys for sensitive plant species were conducted in May 2013 to evaluate current conditions. No special-status plants were observed during the 2013 field reconnaissance or botanical investigations, but sensitive plants could be overlooked outside their blooming season, in times of drought, or establish themselves prior to the onset of construction activities. Botanical investigations concluded that a potential for false negative results exists due to the possibility of the plants being present but not detectable at the time of the survey or due to the limited amount of rainfall for the current year. Therefore, implementation and ongoing project activities could impact special-status plants, both directly (removal) and indirectly (altered site conditions). With implementation of mitigation measure MM-BIO-4, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

Triple-Ribbed Milk-Vetch

The May 2013 survey findings indicated that marginally suitable habitat for the triple-ribbed milk-vetch (*Astragalus tricarinatus*) occurs in Super Creek wash, but no plants were observed at the time of the survey. Records indicate that in 2005 a single plant was observed (location unknown); in 2009, the specimen reported in 2005 was not located but two plants were reported near an access road immediately south of existing quarry. No interim records were available between 2009 and 2013. A biological assessment was prepared in conjunction with preparation of the EA-IS/MND to further evaluate the potential for triple-ribbed milk-vetch to occur on-site and whether it could be affected by project activities. The report concluded that, based on available literature, the known record for triple-ribbed milk-vetch within the Super Creek Quarry mine boundary appears to be a waif occurrence. Waifs are vulnerable to disturbance and loss from random natural events including flood, fire, and climate change, and are also susceptible to anthropogenic disturbance such as the ongoing mining operations. The historical record of one to two plants at Super Creek Quarry is not consistent with records of self-sustaining populations. The report further noted that in addition to the anthropogenic disturbances and lack of rain identified in the focused

plant study; lack of observation may be attributed to the species natural life cycle. BLM staff completed an informal consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff regarding the plant. USFWS staff concurred with the BLM's conclusion that, based on available information, the proposed project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect triple-ribbed milk-vetch, with implementation of mitigation to ensure that if the plant is found during any future special-status plant surveys (MM-BIO-4), the BLM and USFWS staff will determine an appropriate course of action if plants could be disturbed.

> ***MM-BIO-4 Pre-Ground Disturbance Special-Status Plant Surveys for New Areas.*** *A qualified botanist shall be employed to conduct a focused survey for special-status plant species in the quarry expansion and new waste placement areas no more than 30 days prior to the onset of mining and/or reclamation activities within any previously undisturbed lands. Surveys shall also be conducted on any lands left undisturbed for six months prior to any re-disturbance or further mining and/or reclamation activities. If sensitive plants (other than triple-ribbed milk-vetch) are located during preconstruction surveys, the USFWS and/or CDFW (based on the species regulatory status) shall be notified regarding appropriate avoidance or disturbance minimization measures and allowed to transplant the species, if appropriate. Project activities shall be restricted based on USFWS and/or CDFW guidance. Restrictions may include either establishment of avoidance buffer zones, installation of silt fences, and/or alteration of the construction schedule.*
>
> ***Triple-Ribbed Milk-Vetch****. If triple-ribbed milk-vetch is found on the site during any survey, the BLM and USFWS shall coordinate on the appropriate actions to be taken, based on the number of plants and other circumstances involved. Formal consultation may be required unless plant disturbance can be avoided by reconfiguring mining and reclamation activities on the site.*

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.8 and 4.1.8.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is not located within an area identified as critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). There is no riparian habitat on the project site. The Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) identifies the following sensitive natural communities within the Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon Conservation Area, where the project is located: Sonoran creosote bush scrub, Sonoran mixed woody and succulent scrub, Mojave mixed woody scrub, Sonoran cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern sycamore-alder riparian woodland, desert dry wash woodland, and Mojavean pinyon-juniper woodland. However, during on-site surveys, none of these sensitive habitats were identified within the area proposed for disturbance.

One natural community (Sonoran creosote bush scrub) is identified by the CVMSHCP as occurring in the immediate vicinity of the project area. The quarry is omitted from the natural community mapping

(due to existing disturbance) and protected acreage. Therefore, the proposed project would have ***no impact*** on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in regional plans or CDFW or USFWS regulations.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.7 and 4.1.7.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Federally protected wetlands or waters of the U.S. as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act include, but are not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, and coastal habitat. Super Creek and four ephemeral drainages identified within the project area are tributary to the Whitewater River that is a tributary of the Salton Sea, a Traditional Navigable Water. Super Creek is an intermittent stream/dry channel at the base of a canyon at approximately 1,450 feet amsl and runs along the northeast and east side of the project site. There are several stormwater detention basins at the base of the East Tailings Slope, upslope from Super Creek, and separated from Super Creek by a berm containing the mine's access road to the east slopes. The four ephemeral drainages on the west side of project site (western mining expansion area) are tributary to the Whitewater River. Each feature only receives water during rain events.

A jurisdictional delineation was prepared for the proposed project. There are approximately 1.33 acres of stream beds within the project boundary. There are no federally protected wetlands on the project site, but the proposed project would result in the loss of approximately 0.72 acres of jurisdictional waters of the U.S. (ephemeral desert drainages). As such, actions affecting any tributaries of this body of water would be regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under CWA Section 404 and by the Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board under Section 401 of the CWA (water quality certification). Also, under Section 1602 of California Fish and Game Code, the CDFW has jurisdiction over any feature that contains a bed, bank, or channel. With implementation of the following mitigation measure, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

> ***MM-BIO-5 Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S.*** *The jurisdictional delineation for the project conducted on May 30–31, 2013, by the Lilburn Corporation shall be submitted to the USACE for official verification. Based on the amount of jurisdictional waters to be impacted by project implementation, mitigation shall be employed to achieve no net loss of waters and the appropriate permits (e.g., USACE permit, RWQCB Water Quality Certification, and CDFW Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement) shall be obtained prior to any on-site project disturbance of jurisdictional waters.*
>
> *All permit conditions, best management practices, and other measures (established by the permitting authorities) shall be employed to minimize and compensate for potential impact to jurisdictional waters. Any required mitigation plans shall be completed and approved by the regulatory agencies prior to the onset of activities authorized by this project. Mitigation shall also be noted on design plans, as appropriate. At minimum, measures*

shall include restoration or enhancement of an area of equivalent size to the disturbance area within the same watershed that shall be protected in perpetuity from anthropogenic disturbance; implementation of a stormwater pollution prevention plan for the duration of mining activities to ensure the project does not affect the water quality of nearby drainages; and include a description, timetable for completion, and maintenance schedule of planned sedimentation and erosion control improvements in the applicable permits applications so these actions are completed with regulatory oversight to their satisfaction.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.7 and 4.1.7.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Both Super Creek and the Whitewater River provide a wildlife corridor function. Other than sedimentation/detention basin modifications situated immediately adjacent to Super Creek, the proposed activities would occur outside of and away from these two features. Actions near Super Creek are expected to occur when the area is naturally dry and be short-term in duration. Therefore, when considering the context of the area and intensity of the planned modifications, impacts on Super Creek as a wildlife corridor are not expected to be significant. Also, receipt of appropriate permits for maintaining water quality and stabilization of jurisdictional drainages, as described above, would reduce overall potential impacts on the waterway. The Whitewater River would not be directly impacted by proposed activities, and potential effects on tributaries would be negligible with permits for jurisdictional features (as described above). Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to substantially affect either wildlife corridor. Lastly, no known native wildlife nursery sites occur within or adjacent to the project location. Impacts would be ***less than significant***. See Item V(a) regarding raptors and migratory birds.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.10 and 4.1.10.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with the any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance. Therefore, ***no impact*** would occur.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) identifies the natural community in the vicinity of Super Creek Quarry as Sonoran creosote bush scrub. However, the quarry is omitted from the area to be preserved due to existing disturbance (Figure 4-12c in the CVMSHCP). Further, as noted above, during on-site surveys, no Sonoran creosote bush scrub habitat was identified within the area proposed for disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the conservation goals of the CVMSHCP, and there would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.7, 3.1.10, 4.1.7, and 4.1.10.*

VI. CULTURAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
	☐	☒	☐	☐
(b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

Literature reviews, EIC records searches, and intensive pedestrian surveys conducted by CRM TECH in 2004, 2006, and 2013 indicated that no known cultural resources are located within the Super Creek Quarry Expansion project area. In addition, the closest known and recorded cultural resources are not located adjacent to the project area and would not be impacted by the proposed expansion and amended reclamation plan. Thus, the proposed project would have no impact on historical resources.

Based on the records search and literature review, there are no known Native American resources within the study area, but the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) has indicated the area around the study area is culturally sensitive, although no specific sites were identified. Several Tribal representatives responding to a 2013 NAHC Sacred Lands Files (SLF) search recommended monitoring during ground-disturbing activities. Because the study area is considered highly sensitive for Native American Resources, there is the potential to disturb such resources during project implementation. With implementation of the following mitigation measures, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

MM-CR-1 Consultation Prior to Ground Disturbance for New Areas. *Prior to ground disturbance in the quarry expansion areas or placement of tailings in new permanent waste placement areas authorized by this project, the BLM shall complete consultation with local Native American representatives, including any site visits, if requested, and Section 106 consultation, as appropriate.*

MM-CR-2 Native American Monitoring During Ground Disturbance: *A Native American monitor shall be present during initial ground-disturbing activities to ensure that resources will not be directly or indirectly impacted in any new areas of excavation. Monitoring may be reduced or potentially eliminated if the Native American monitor determines that the potential for impacts has been eliminated.*

In addition, it is always possible that ground-disturbing activities may uncover presently obscured or buried and previously unknown cultural resources. In the event that buried cultural resources are discovered during construction, such resources could be damaged or destroyed, resulting in adverse effects to cultural resources. With implementation of the following mitigation measure, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

MM-CR-3 Accidental Discovery of Cultural Resources: *In the event that buried cultural resources are discovered during construction, such resources could be damaged or destroyed, resulting in adverse effects to cultural resources. If subsurface cultural resources are encountered during construction, if evidence of an archaeological site or if other suspected historic resources are encountered, it is recommended that all ground-disturbing activity cease within 100 feet of the resource. A professional archaeologist or the BLM Cultural Resources Specialist shall be consulted to assess the find, and to determine whether the resource requires further study. This assessment process may require consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), tribal groups, and other interested parties. The qualified archeological personnel shall assist the lead agency by generating measures to protect the discovered resources, which may include input from interested parties. Any previously undiscovered resources found during project implementation should be recorded on appropriate DPR forms and evaluated for significance under all applicable regulatory criteria.*

In addition, reasonable efforts to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on the resources will be determined by the BLM. Such efforts will be communicated by the BLM to the SHPO, Native American tribes with concerns about the property, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) within 48 hours in compliance with 36 CFR 800.13(b)(3).

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.2 and 4.1.2.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The geologic material at the project site that would be quarried is composed of igneous intrusive bedrock (granite and gneiss) that has been altered through metamorphism and tectonic forces. No vertebrate or invertebrate animal fossils or plant remains are known to exist in such rock, nor would any be present in the fill (waste) material from quarrying. With the exception of the discharge outlet from the proposed

new sedimentation basin #1 at the base of the Northwest Waste Placement Area, no mining or reclamation activities would affect Super Creek channel sediments. The Holocene alluvium and colluvium in the channel have a very low potential for intact fossil remains because of the creek's young age and fluvial processes that have reworked the sediments. There would be ***no impact*** from mining or reclamation activities on paleontological resources.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

There are no known formal cemeteries present within the project area. The results of the NAHC SLF search and the Native American information scoping process indicate that no specific resources are located in the project area, but that the project area and adjacent environs are considered highly sensitive for Native American resources. However, there is always the possibility that ground-disturbing activities may uncover previously unknown buried human remains. If human remains, including disarticulated or cremated remains, are discovered during mining or reclamation, federal and state laws and standards apply including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and its regulations found at 43 CFR 10. With implementation of the following mitigation measure, impacts would be ***less than significant with mitigation incorporated***.

> ***MM-CR-4 Accidental Discovery of Human Remains.*** *In the event of accidental discovery or recognition of any human remains, all ground-disturbing activities should cease within 100 feet of the remains. California State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 dictates that no further disturbance shall occur until the county coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin and disposition. If the remains are determined by the county coroner to be Native American and not subject to their authority, and said remains are found on BLM lands, then the BLM shall be notified within 24 hours. If the remains are found to be Native American as defined by NAGPRA (Public Law 101-601), the BLM shall take the lead in the treatment of said remains and any associated objects by implementing the appropriate agency procedures for NAGPRA compliance.*

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.2 and 4.1.2.*

VII. GEOLOGY/SOILS

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

There are no faults that cross the site, and the site is not within a California-designated earthquake fault zone requiring special investigation. There would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The Banning fault is less than 0.5 mile south of the quarry. Severe seismic shaking can be expected to occur during the lifetime of the proposed project. However, there are currently no occupied structures that could be exposed to ground shaking, and none are proposed as part of mining or reclamation. All proposed quarry excavations would be in bedrock. Quarry slopes (no benching is proposed) would be excavated to no steeper than 1.2H:1V around the pit. The slope stability investigation for the proposed project concluded the slopes would have a seismic safety factor of over 2. This indicates the quarry slopes would be stable during a seismic event. Because the site is underlain by bedrock at shallow depths, the potential for liquefaction is nonexistent. Impacts would be ***less than significant.*** See Item VII(c) for additional evaluation of slope stability.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project has been designed to prevent erosion and/or sedimentation of adjacent properties (including Super Creek and the Whitewater River) due to waters discharged from, or entering, the project site. Velocity control devices would break up the area into small micro-drainages, allowing use of smaller control structures, greater infiltration rates, lowered erosion rates, and thus smaller sediment loads. Erosion control measures (e.g., cross ditches, berms, waterbars, and straw wattles) would be implemented where necessary to achieve this complete retention. Figures 4 through 8 show the locations of erosion control features. The drainage and erosion control features would be maintained and inspected periodically to ensure they are operating as expected.

There is no topsoil on the existing quarry area, and due to the rocky nature of the bedrock materials, very little on the proposed expansion area. Topsoil that does exist is composed of sands, silts, and clays in a very thin veneer of less than 12 inches thick. As the proposed mining expansion area is incrementally expanded, any growth media would be stockpiled at up to three designated topsoil stockpile areas located near the quarry access road for subsequent use in reclamation activities as shown in Figure 3. This stockpiled material would be covered with coarse aggregate or planted with a native vegetative cover as needed to prevent wind/water erosion. Any overburden waste rock encountered would be deposited into either the Northwest or Southwest Waste Placement Area.

Therefore, erosion and topsoil impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 4.1.3, and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The project site is located in the lower elevations of the southeastern reaches of the San Bernardino Mountains. The regional topography is in a youthful stage of development characterized by rugged terrain with very steep slopes exceeding 1H:1V (horizontal:vertical) and high stream gradients. The general topography at the project site is very rocky and rugged, with two prominent rocky knolls. Elevations on-site range from approximately 2,000 feet amsl in the southeast corner of the site to approximately 2,450 feet amsl on the hilltop in the west-central area. The northeast and east slopes of the project site (outside the quarry area but within the project boundary) are steep and highly dissected. The geologic units at the Super Creek Quarry site consist of Precambrian to Mesozoic granitic/gneissic

bedrock, late Cenozoic marine sedimentary rocks, Quaternary (Holocene) alluvium and colluvium, and fill.

Mining

The proposed project would develop five main features: northwest hilltop quarry, west central hilltop quarry, southeastern pit area, Northwest Waste Placement Area, and the Southwest Waste Placement Area. The following describes potential slope stability effects for those areas.

East Tailings Slopes. Active waste sidecasting at the East Tailings Slopes ceased in March 2008, and the east slopes would not be used for any further waste material disposal. Reclamation of these slopes has been initiated, and the slopes would continue to be reclaimed and monitored for erosion for the life of the project. The stability of the East Tailings Slopes has been thoroughly evaluated and is described under "Reclamation" below.

Northwest Hilltop, West Central, and Southeastern Pit Quarry Areas. The new quarry areas would be mined to a maximum depth of approximately 130 feet in the hilltop area and approximately 150 feet in the pit area. The excavations would remove the top portion of two small hills just west of, but contiguous to, the existing quarry operations. The northwestern hill would be mined from approximately 2,350 feet amsl to a quarry elevation of 2,250 feet amsl. The west central hill would be mined from approximately 2,480 feet amsl to a quarry elevation of approximately 6 acres at an elevation of 2,350 feet amsl. From this quarry elevation, slopes would be cut at 3H:1V, gradually steepening to 1.2H:1V to form an irregular-shaped pit floor of approximately 1 acre at 2,125 feet amsl in the southeastern portion of the site. The mining cut slopes would be entirely in bedrock with a static factor of safety of over 3 and a seismic factor of safety of over 2. This indicates the cut slopes in the quarry would be stable. All quarry slopes would be reclaimed to produce stable slopes, reducing the possibility of landslides, earth flows, or rock falls.

Northwest and Southwest Waste Placement Areas. Loose, unconsolidated materials placed in the proposed waste placement areas have the potential for becoming unstable unless measures are in place to stabilize them. Both waste placement areas would be developed with 2H:1V slopes with 10-foot-wide benches at 25-foot vertical intervals. The slopes would be protected with water bars and straw wattles, with water directed to rock-lined down drains. At the Southwest Waste Placement area, the lower drainage would be detained by a proposed riprap dam. No water would be allowed to flow over the waste slopes.

The slope stability investigation for the proposed waste placement areas concluded the slopes would be stable if designed as described above and provided all loose alluvial materials are removed below the proposed slopes, and fill material placed and spread evenly in lifts, using conventional heavy equipment. The moisture content should be at least 7 percent by weight, or as determined by laboratory testing. Water would be added during the placement process to facilitate compaction of the tailings. Upon final grading completion, the slopes would be revegetated per the revegetation plan.

Based on the results of the slope stability investigations, which assume the design features described above, the new waste placement area slopes would not pose a substantial hazard related to slope stability. Therefore, impacts of quarry expansion would be ***less than significant***.

Reclamation

Quarry Expansion and New Waste Placement Areas. Reclamation procedures would include regrading as necessary to achieve planned slopes, implementing and maintaining erosion control features, roughening the compacted surface to hold moisture, adding any stockpiled surface material containing banked seeds and available silts, seeding with native seeds, and staking or flagging reclaimed areas to eliminate additional disturbance. Reclamation activities would be accomplished concurrently with the planned excavations.

Annual slope stability monitoring would be performed by a registered professional engineer or geologist, who would observe the heights and inclinations of all on-site slopes with respect to the mining and reclamation plan requirements. This observation would include an assessment of whether the slopes are within the permitted boundaries. Evidence for instability observed, such as tension cracks, deep-seated failures, shallow failures (including soil-slip type failures and rockfalls/toppling), and areas of significant erosion would be noted. Recommendations for mitigation of significant slope failure concerns would be included. Such measures could include removal of overburden, buttressing, slope flattening, slope removal, manual or equipment-based scaling of loose boulders, and minor regrading to redirect surface water flows. If a potential hazard to people or equipment is observed, then recommendations for protection of people and equipment would be provided. A report would be prepared that documents the site observations, potential slope stability concerns, and recommended mitigation, if any, and included in the overall annual report.

East Tailings Slopes. Active deposition of waste onto the East Tailings Slopes ceased in March 2008. Reclamation of these slopes to reduce and limit erosion of the fine materials is ongoing. Actions undertaken during 2012, which would be monitored, maintained, and remediated as necessary in the future to limit erosion on the slopes included construction and maintenance of sediment basins at the toe of the slope, placement of riprap at toe of slope, reduction of the top of slopes by material removal, erosion control cross terracing, and revegetation. The most current study (2012) concluded the slopes are stable for purposes of reclamation. No additional measures with respect to deep-seated slope stability were determined to be necessary for reclamation of the existing slopes, as no evidence of deep-seated instability, such as tension cracks, scarps, or slumping, have been observed. In addition, there is a very low potential for impacts on Super Creek in the event that a seismically induced landslide occurs in the existing tailings slopes in the future.

However, to confirm assumptions with regard to strength parameters used in the slope stability calculations for the East Tailings Slopes, additional testing of tailings slope materials would be conducted prior to establishment of final slopes locations. Specifically, additional tailings material sampling and strength testing would be conducted by a qualified professional when the quarry floor reaches an elevation of 2,150 feet. Samples would be collected from materials undisturbed by post-2008 mining. The results of such confirmation slope stability testing would be documented in a final slope stability report, and if changes to the East Tailings Slope design are warranted, the reclamation plan would be amended as required. Amendment of the reclamation plan would be subject to OMR review and comment and SMGB approval.

Based on the foregoing, impacts related to reclamation would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Section 1802.3.2 of the 2010 California Building Code, creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed project would not build structures or expose people to risks from expansive soils. There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed project would not generate wastewater, and there are no septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal facilities at the quarry. There would be ***no impact***.

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would generate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from mining and reclamation activities. Annual GHG emissions would be 1,792 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MTCO_2e$). The proposed expansion of the Super Creek Quarry would not result in a net annual increase in greenhouse gas emissions because the proposed expansion would only increase the footprint of the quarry and would not change its operational and mining processes. The SCAQMD has adopted a numerical GHG significance threshold of 10,000 $MTCO_2e$ per year for industrial processes. CalEEMod model results show that the proposed project (as well as the existing activities) would emit a maximum of 1,792 $MTCO_2e$ per year, which would be below the SCAQMD's threshold for industrial processes. Because the proposed project would not result in an annual increase in GHG emissions, and emissions

would fall below the CEQA significance threshold for GHG emissions, impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.1 and 4.1.1.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Assembly Bill (AB) 32 is currently the applicable plan adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. AB 32 is implemented through the Scoping Plan, which is the statewide plan for the reduction of GHG emissions. The proposed project would not increase annual GHG emissions and would be below the SCAQMD's screening threshold set for industrial projects in order for the region to meet the goals of AB 32. Therefore, the project would not conflict with AB 32, and there would be ***no impact.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.1 and 4.1.1.*

IX. HAZARDS/HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

All rock products and waste rock are naturally occurring rock. Chemicals or other hazardous materials are not used or produced during processing of materials at the quarry, nor are any proposed for future use. Identical to existing conditions, blasting, or storage of explosives on-site, is not proposed. Diesel fuel would continue to be delivered by truck to the 1,000-gallon diesel fuel aboveground storage tank (AST) in the quarry. No increase in diesel deliveries or storage volumes is proposed.

Expansion of mining operations would involve excavation into bedrock to create the quarry pit and development of new waste placement areas. There is no known or suspected soil contamination in the proposed pit expansion or waste placement areas because the site has been used exclusively for mining for several decades and was natural open space prior to that. Therefore, there would be no potential to encounter soil contamination during active excavation. There is the potential for minor spills during fueling in the quarry or petroleum leaks from heavy equipment, similar to existing operations. There

would be no change in the types or number of heavy equipment use. Further, any soils that may have become contaminated from spills would be stockpiled, tested for contaminants, and removed from the site in accordance with all federal, state, and local regulations to an approved hazardous waste repository. Reclamation activities would involve the use of heavy equipment, similar to that used for mining, which would be a potential source of minor soil contamination in the event of spills or leaks. Fuel in the diesel AST would be removed and the surplus diesel and AST would be disposed of in accordance with applicable hazardous waste requirements. Soil around the AST would be tested for contamination. Prior to final recontouring and revegetation of the site, a final environmental site review would be conducted by the BLM to verify that soil contamination, if any, has been remediated.

Identical to existing conditions, the majority of any heavy equipment maintenance would continue to occur off-site at Painted Hills' repair facility; however, unplanned repairs or minor maintenance may occur at the quarry site if required. Any waste oil generated by the project would be collected and transported for off-site disposal by approved methods via properly trained and licensed personnel. Painted Hills maintains an existing Business Plan, a hazardous materials inventory, and a SPCC which include employee training, record keeping, preventive maintenance, and BMPs. These plans are submitted to the Hazardous Materials Management Division, the CUPA for Riverside County, which is responsible for regulating hazardous materials business plans and hazardous waste.

Therefore, the proposed project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or upset/accident conditions. Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.9 and 4.1.9.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

There are no schools located within 0.25 mile of the project site. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.9 and 4.1.9.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 (Cortese List). There would ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.9 and 4.1.9.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) If located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f) If within the vicinity of a private airstrip, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

There are no public or private airports within 2 miles of the project site. There would ***no impact.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 3.1.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

No modifications to the access roadway are proposed. There would be ***no impact*** on emergency response or evacuation plans.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is in an undeveloped area and is not adjacent to any occupied uses. The site and surrounding areas are sparsely vegetated. The proposed project would not increase the risk of wildland fire hazard. There would be ***no impact.***

X. HYDROLOGY/WATER QUALITY

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The Super Creek Quarry operates under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activities ("Industrial Permit"). Under this permit, Painted Hills is responsible for self-monitoring and collecting data about stormwater discharges from the quarry. The Industrial Permit requires that stormwater samples be collected and analyzed for pH (a measure of acidity/alkalinity), total suspended solids (TSS, a measure of undissolved solids such as sediment), specific conductance (SC, a measure of how water conducts an electrical current), total organic carbon (TOC, a measure of how much carbon-containing organic matter), and oil and grease (O&G). Quarterly results must be reported to the Colorado River Regional Water Quality Control Board, along with visual observations.

Under the NPDES program, Painted Hills is also required to use stormwater best management practices (BMPs) to control pollutants in stormwater runoff and to implement a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) that identifies measures and monitoring procedures. Stormwater BMPs at the existing quarry include the sedimentation basins along with water bars, straw wattles, and excelsior fencing.

The proposed project includes specific drainage, erosion, and sediment control features that are incorporated into the design of each element of the proposed quarry expansion including the East Tailings Slopes, West Slopes, Southwest Waste Placement Area, Northwest Waste Placement Area, north, west central, and existing quarry areas, and stockpile areas. These features are designed to minimize potential effects on drainage patterns, erosion, sedimentation, and off-site water quality in Super Creek and the Whitewater River and to ensure the quarry expansion continues to comply with the

NDPES Industrial Permit requirements for BMPs and a SWPPP. Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1, 3.1.3, and 3.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Groundwater is used at the quarry for dust suppression activities (spraying roads, active stockpiles, and active mining areas). Water is obtained from an off-site well at the Painted Hills retail site. There are no on-site groundwater wells. A water truck transports water to the project site daily as needed. Expanded quarry operations and reclamation would not require additional groundwater because no change in quantities or processing is proposed. Water for reclamation would be limited to groundwater use for dust suppression. Revegetation seeding would take place between November and January to take advantage of winter precipitation, which would eliminate the need for irrigation. The site is not within a groundwater recharge area; however, drainage west of the project area drains to the Whitewater River, which is a groundwater recharge area. The proposed expansion of mining operations and reclamation would not affect flows to the Whitewater River or the river channel, and, therefore, would have no effect on groundwater recharge. Impacts would be ***less than significant.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that would result in flooding on or off site?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(e) Create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would add approximately 33.4 acres of additional quarry, waste placement areas, and sediment basins including the two small hilltops just west of the existing quarry operation and additional waste placement areas for a total active mining area of 57.2 acres. Approximately 21 acres along the western and southern boundaries of the site would remain undisturbed.

Similar to current operations, expansion of mining activities have the potential alter to drainage patterns on the site, result in erosion, and generate fine materials/sediment that could be carried to Super Creek, which could affect water quality in this intermittent stream. Under the proposed project, mining would occur in a manner that would provide for retention of any waters that may occur on-site within the excavation area, similar to existing conditions. As mining continues, a central depression would be maintained to allow any on-site water flows to deposit sediments within the confines of the expansion area. This enclosed depression area would be maintained until the quarry is mined to its final depth. Berming along the perimeter of the quarry expansion area would be used to supplement the retention of water flows on-site. No ponds or reservoirs are proposed. Dams or embankments are not proposed for any excavation or processing activity during mining, except for a small riprap dam for a detention basin in the Southwest Waste Placement Area, which would be left in place. These features would ensure there is no net increase in surface runoff flows to Super Creek or the Whitewater River that could cause off-site flooding.

The proposed project has been designed to prevent erosion and/or sedimentation of adjacent properties (including Super Creek and the Whitewater River) due to waters discharged from, or entering, the project site. Velocity control devices would break up the area into small micro-drainages, allowing use of smaller control structures, greater infiltration rates, lowered erosion rates, and thus smaller sediment loads. Erosion control measures (e.g., cross ditches, berms, waterbars, and straw wattles) would be implemented where necessary to achieve this complete retention. Figures 4 through 8 show the locations of erosion control features. The drainage and erosion control features would be maintained and inspected periodically to ensure they are operating as expected.

As with current operations, quarry expansion would comply with NDPES Industrial Permit requirements for BMPs and a SWPPP. Throughout the life of the project, Painted Hills would continue to submit annual Mining Operation Reports to the OMR, the SMGB, and the BLM, as required by amendments to SMARA. The annual monitoring reports would assess existing conditions on-site, including slope erosion and drainage controls, and would provide recommendations to improve and/or remediate any deficiencies in these areas.

The proposed project includes specific drainage, erosion, and sediment control features that are incorporated into the design of each element of the proposed quarry expansion, as described above. These features are designed to minimize potential effects on drainage patterns, erosion, sedimentation, and off-site water quality in Super Creek and the Whitewater River.

In addition, implementation of the Plan of Operations/Amended Reclamation Plan would include regrading as necessary to achieve planned slopes, implementing and maintaining erosion control features, roughening the compacted surface to hold moisture, adding any stockpiled surface material containing banked seeds and available silts, seeding with native seeds, and staking or flagging reclaimed areas to eliminate additional disturbance. Reclamation activities would be implemented concurrently with the planned excavations. All quarry areas would incorporate grading that gently slopes to a central depression area for drainage collection. The small detention basin with riprap dam in the southwest area would be left in place. The permanent perimeter quarry area in the upper northwest areas would be reclaimed as completed to meet designed slopes and revegetated concurrent with ongoing mining. Revegetation would be ongoing during the quarry mining operation once the final slopes and quarry floors have been established. Reclamation and revegetation would be undertaken within two years of the cessation of all excavation activities. However, final reclamation would be contingent on meeting the revegetation success criteria and may continue longer than five years.

With the implementation of the proposed drainage and erosion/sediment control features described above, compliance with the Industrial Permit and SWPPP, and routine monitoring/inspection, the proposed project would result in ***less than significant*** impacts on drainage, erosion/sedimentation, and water quality during mining and reclamation.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.3 and 3.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures that would impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is not located in a recognized floodway or 100-year floodplain, nor is it subject to flash flooding. The site's elevation precludes the risk of levee or dam failure inundation. There is no risk of inundation from tsunami or seiche because of the site's inland location. Mudflow hazards are not present at the project site. There would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 3.1.*

XI. LAND USE/PLANNING

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is an existing quarry and is bordered by undeveloped land. Expanded mining operations and reclamation would not physically divide an established community. Therefore, there would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is within the planning area of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, and the western part of the project site is within the Whitewater Canyon Area of Critical Concern (ACEC) Management Plan. Mining would continue the existing use under the Class L (Limited Use) designation in the CDCA Plan and the Whitewater Canyon ACEC Management Plan. Expanded mining operations, including the waste placement areas, would not represent a new use or a change in land use that would be inconsistent with the resource management policies of those land use plans. Reclamation would continue the existing use under the Class L (Limited Use) designation in the California Desert Conservation Area Plan and the Whitewater Canyon ACEC Management Plan. The Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) identifies the natural community in the vicinity of the Super Creek Quarry as Sonoran creosote bush scrub. However, the quarry is omitted from the acreage managed under the CVMSCHP due to existing disturbance. Further, as noted above, during on-site surveys, no Sonoran creosote bush scrub habitat was identified within the area proposed for disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the conservation goals of the CVMSHCP, and there would be ***no impact***.

The City of Desert Hot Springs General Plan designates the site as Open Space/Mountain Reserve (OS/MR) and the areas to the south as Industrial Energy-Related (I-E), where numerous wind-energy turbines are located. The General Plan includes an Energy and Mineral Resources Element; however, there are no policies that are relevant to the proposed project. The proposed use of the reclaimed project land is vacant open space managed by the BLM. A post-reclamation open space land use would be consistent with the City of Desert Hot Springs General Plan designation. There would be ***no impact***.

Reclamation actions that would result in regrading and contouring the site to final slopes and use of erosion control methods would be consistent with federal requirements established in 43 CFR 3409 and SMARA.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.5, 3.1.7, 4.1.5, and 4.1.7.*

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The quarry is a source of a specialty decorative stone used locally. While the State Geologist has classified the mine area as MRZ-2, it is not considered regionally significant and is not identified by the City of Desert Hot Springs as a locally important mineral resource recovery site. There would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

XIII. NOISE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Result in the exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(b) Result in the exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(c) Result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(d) Result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would not increase the noise levels beyond current noise levels because no changes in extraction rates or methods or processing are proposed. Reclamation would use some heavy equipment for grading and recontouring, but there would be no net changes in noise levels that would result in a temporary, periodic, or permanent source of noise or vibration, and there are no noise-sensitive receptors near the site. Therefore, impacts would be ***less than significant.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 3.1.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) If located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in the exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f) If within the vicinity of a private airstrip, result in the exposure of people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The Super Creek Quarry is not located within an airport land use plan or within 2 miles of an airport or heliport or private airstrip. The Palm Springs Airport is approximately 10 miles to the southeast. Therefore, there would be ***no impact.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 3.1.*

XIV. POPULATION/HOUSING

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Material excavated and processed from the quarry is used for decorative stone. It is not used for building or infrastructure construction. Quarry expansion and reclamation would not result in a change in the number of people working at the site. It would not require new infrastructure or roadways. Therefore, it would not be growth-inducing, and there would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The project site is an existing quarry operation. There is no housing. There would be ***no impact***.

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(i) Fire protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(ii) Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The quarry is on BLM land. No changes in quarry operations are proposed that would require new or expanded federal, state, or local fire or police protection services. There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(iii) Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(iv) Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(v) Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed expansion and amended reclamation plan would not result in the development of housing or otherwise increase population. Therefore, there would be no demand for schools, parks, or other public facilities, and there would be ***no impact***.

XVI. RECREATION

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

Recreational use of the current quarry site and areas proposed for quarry expansion is limited to hunting, rock hounding, and bird watching and other passive recreational activities. The project area is remote and not near any established recreational hiking trails, and use of the area for recreation has historically been

light. Following reclamation, the site would be reclaimed as open space and managed by the BLM. The proposed project would not result in an increase in population that would result in the demand for recreational facilities. There would be ***no impact***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Section 3.1.*

XVII. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Conflict with an applicable plan, ordinance, or policy establishing measures of effectiveness for the performance of the circulation system, taking into account all modes of transportation including mass transit and nonmotorized travel and relevant components of the circulation system, including, but not limited to, intersections, streets, highways and freeways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and mass transit?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b) Conflict with an applicable congestion management program, including, but not limited to, level of service standards and travel demand measures, or other standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(f) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed project includes no changes in rates of excavation, materials processing, or materials sales. Therefore, no changes in the number of vehicle trips required to transport processed and sold materials or to transport employees and other mine-related personnel to and from the quarry site are anticipated. In addition, ongoing mine reclamation activities under the proposed project would be carried out in a manner consistent with current practices and therefore would result in no substantive changes to future vehicle traffic relative to current reclamation practices. No modifications to the access roadway are proposed that would result in design hazards or affect emergency access. The proposed project does not involve aircraft operations. There would be ***no impact.***

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.6 and 4.1.6.*

XVIII. UTILITIES/SERVICE SYSTEMS

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
(a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☐	☒
(b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The existing quarry does not generate wastewater requiring treatment. Proposed quarry expansion and reclamation would not generate wastewater. There would be ***no impact.***

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Require or result in the construction of new stormwater drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

See Item X(e). The stormwater collection system at the quarry would be modified to incorporate the expansion area; however, all stormwater would be collected on-site in sedimentation basins. The potential environmental effects of the improvements are accounted for in the air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology/soils, greenhouse gases, hydrology, and noise analyses contained in this IS/MND. Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Groundwater is used at the quarry for dust suppression activities (spraying roads, active stockpiles, and active mining areas). Water is obtained from an off-site well at the Painted Hills retail site. There are no on-site groundwater wells, and no on- or off-site surface water supplies are used to provide water for quarry uses. A water truck transports water to the project site daily as needed. Bottled drinking water is provided for employees and vendors. Expanded quarry operations would not require additional water beyond current use because no change in quantities or processing is proposed. Water for reclamation would be limited to groundwater obtained from the off-site well and would be used for dust suppression.

Revgetation seeding would take place between November and January to take advantage of winter precipitation, which would eliminate the need for irrigation. Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.4 and 4.1.4.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

As noted above, implementation of the proposed project would require no wastewater treatment services. There would be ***no impact***.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☐	☒	☐
(g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Solid waste is not generated at the existing quarry site. Waste rock from mining operations is stockpiled on-site. There is no off-site transport of solid wastes from the quarry. Equipment not required for final reclamation would be removed from the site. Equipment that would no longer be needed (e.g., load hopper, old crusher, screens, steel conveyors) would be removed by a scrap metal company and could be recycled. Effects on landfill capacity would be negligible. Impacts would be ***less than significant***.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 3.1.9 and 4.1.9.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(h) Require or result in the construction of new energy production or transmission facilities, or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause a significant environmental impact?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Discussion

The proposed project would not require new or expanded energy production or transmission facilities. There would be ***no impact***.

XIX. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would not result in any net increase in air pollutant emissions, greenhouse gases (GHGs), noise, or traffic. It would not require expansion or new construction of public services or utility systems that could cause environmental effects, and it would not be growth-inducing. There would be no new or different land uses that could degrade the quality of the environment compared to existing conditions. It would not eliminate or deplete a mineral resource that is of statewide or local importance.

The proposed project has the potential to affect three sensitive wildlife species (desert tortoise, burrowing owl, and LeConte's thrasher), raptors and migratory birds protected by the MBTA. Implementation of mitigation measures MM-BIO-1, MM-BIO-2, and MM-BIO-3 would ensure surveys are performed prior to disturbance in new areas in the project site. If species or habitat would be affected, actions would be taken to avoid and/or protect species and habitat in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Although special-status plants were not observed on-site during 2013 surveys, implementation of mitigation measures MM-BIO-4 would ensure a survey is performed prior to disturbance in new areas. If sensitive plants are found, appropriate avoidance or disturbance minimization measures would be implemented, or project activities would be restricted based on USFWS and/or CDFW guidance. Restrictions may include establishment of avoidance buffer zones, installation of silt fences, or alteration of the construction schedule.

The proposed project would not affect any significant historical resources (see Item V[a]). However, the study area is considered highly sensitive for Native American resources, and there is the potential to disturb such resources. The site may also contain previously undiscovered resources of cultural significance, including human remains, that may be adversely affected by mining and/or reclamation activities. This Initial Study includes mitigation measures CR-1 through CR-4 that adequately mitigate these impacts to a level that is considered less than significant.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

Past, Present, and Future Probable Projects

The BLM database of mineral claims does not include any active claims in the immediate region. There are numerous closed placer and lode claims, however (five placer claims and nine lode claims in the same area). Based on OMR records, approximately 13 mines are currently approved to operate in this region. The closest active aggregate operations are approximately 4 miles southeast of the project site at Indian Avenue and I-10, and approximately 8 miles west in Cabazon. There are no other known decorative rock operations in the region operated on either public or private lands. There are no known pending mining projects on BLM land within the Coachella Valley region. Due to the environmentally sensitive areas in vicinity (where not developed with wind farms), the BLM does not anticipate future mining operations in the immediate area.

The area around the project site to the south, southeast, and southwest has been extensively developed with wind farms on a combination of private and federal lands. The BLM has established solar zones to facilitate solar energy production. There are no solar energy zones within the Coachella Valley. The closest zone (Riverside East) is approximately 70 miles east of the Proposed Action. The BLM has authorized over 26,000 acres of wind development in the Desert Region. Numerous wind energy projects are located on both public and private lands within the San Gorgonio Pass area, approximately 5 miles west and east of the Proposed Action. BLM is not aware of any future plans for wind farm expansions in the immediate area, and there are no known solar or wind applications for testing or development authorizations within the Coachella Valley region in the Palm Springs Field Office area.

Reference: *Super Creek Quarry Expansion EA-IS/MND (PMC 2014), Sections 5.4 and 5.5.*

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The proposed project has the potential to contribute to cumulative aesthetics, air quality, GHG emissions, biological resources, cultural resources, and hydrology/water quality impacts. The geographical areas considered for the analysis of cumulative impacts vary in size and shape to reflect each evaluated environmental resource and the potential area of impact to each from the proposed project. The cumulative context for each topic is presented in the analysis. For other resource areas, the proposed project would have no or minimal impact that would contribute to a cumulative impact.

Aesthetics

The cumulative context for aesthetics is the four KOPs described and areas surrounding the KOPs from which unobstructed views of the project site are possible. There are no past, present, or reasonably foreseeable exploration, mining, or renewable energy projects pending within the viewsheds of the four

KOPs. Moreover, visual impacts from a wind energy project and a mining project are not similar or cumulative in nature. With the design of the proposed project (revegetation, termination of tailings deposited on the East Tailings Slopes, lowering the top of the tailings slope, and rock fill of erosion features), the project's contribution would not be cumulatively considerable. Further, there are no reasonably foreseeable actions in the area that would add to cumulative impacts. No mitigation is required.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

The cumulative context for air quality is the Riverside County portion of the South Coast Air Basin. There would be no net increase in criteria air pollutant emissions compared to existing conditions; therefore, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of pollutants for which the South Coast Air Basin is nonattainment (ozone and PM_{10}).

Similarly, the proposed expansion would not result in a net annual increase in greenhouse gas emissions, and, therefore, would not contribute to cumulative GHG/climate change impacts. See Item IV (Air Quality) and Item VIII (Greenhouse Gas Emissions). No mitigation is required.

Biological Resources

The cumulative context for biological resources (vegetation and wildlife) is the Whitewater Canyon ACEC encompassing approximately 11,200 acres. The proposed project would result in disturbance of habitat that could contribute to potentially cumulative significant impacts to sensitive biological resources (vegetation and wildlife) in the region and, specifically, the Whitewater Canyon ACEC. However, implementation of the mitigation measures MM-BIO-1 through MM-BIO5 would reduce the project's contribution to potential cumulative biological resource impacts to levels that would be less-than-cumulatively considerable. No additional mitigation is required.

Cultural Resources

The cumulative context for cultural resources is the traditional territories of two Native American groups: the Pass Cahuilla of the San Gorgonio Pass and the northwestern Coachella Valley, one of the three subgroups—as defined by modern anthropologists—of the Cahuilla people, and the Serrano of the San Bernardino Mountains.

There no known historic resources are located within the Super Creek Quarry Expansion project area. The closest known and recorded cultural resources are not located adjacent to the project area and would not be impacted by the proposed expansion and amended reclamation plan. Based on the records search and literature review, there are no known Native American resources within the study area, but the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) has indicated the area around the study area is culturally sensitive, although no specific sites were identified. If future mining or reclamation activities encounter previously unknown resources, implementation of mitigation measures MM-CR-1, MM-CR-2, MM-CR-3, and MM-CR-4 would ensure the appropriate actions are taken to identify, protect, and report discoveries, and impacts would be less than cumulative considerable.

Hydrology and Water Quality

The cumulative context for hydrology and water quality is the West Colorado River Basin, Whitewater Hydrologic Unit. Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) have not been adopted for Super Creek or the Whitewater River. The proposed project includes specific drainage, erosion, and sediment control features incorporated into project design to minimize potential effects on drainage patterns, erosion, sedimentation, and off-site water quality in Super Creek and the Whitewater River during mining in accordance with applicable NDPES Industrial Permit requirements. As with current operations, the mine operator would continue to evaluate the effectiveness of erosion and drainage controls, and if necessary, would remediate any deficiencies. Reclamation activities would include grading and revegetation to stabilize soils. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to hydrology and water quality impacts.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
(c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The proposed project would generate criteria air pollutant emissions and GHGs; however, there would be no net increase in emissions, as described in Item IV (Air Quality) and Item VIII (Greenhouse Gas Emissions) because there would be no change in extraction or processing. Expanded quarry operations and reclamation would not expose people or structures to geologic hazards (see Item VII, Geology/Soils). The proposed project would involve the use of hazardous materials, but the types and amounts of materials would be the same as existing conditions. Implementation of federal and state regulations pertaining to hazardous materials use would ensure risks are minimized to the extent required by laws and regulations. There is the potential for soil contamination from heavy equipment use, but contamination, if any, would be remediated in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, as described in Item IX (Hazards/Hazardous Materials). The project would not place structures or people in areas subject to flood hazard (see Item X, Hydrology/Water Quality). The proposed project would generate periodic noise identical to existing conditions. There would be no net increase in permanent, temporary, or periodic noise levels, and there are no noise-sensitive receptors in the project vicinity (see Item XIII). Expansion of the existing quarry and reclamation would not result in incompatible land uses that could affect people in the vicinity. There would be no change in traffic volumes or roadway design hazards. Because the proposed project would not have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly, impacts would be ***less than significant***.

SECTION 6. **References**

Lilburn Corporation. 2013. *Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137* (CA ID #91-33-0003).

PMC. 2014. *Super Creek Quarry Expansion Revised BLM Plan of Operations and Amended Reclamation Plan No. 137 Environmental Assessment and Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration*. Prepared for U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation and California Department of Conservation State Mining and Geology Board.

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