

3.10

MINERAL RESOURCES

3.10 Mineral Resources

This section of the Draft EIR describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions related to mineral resources in and around Merced, and the potential mineral resources impacts of the proposed General Plan.

3.10.1 SETTING

Environmental Setting

The City of Merced does not contain any mineral resources that require managed production, according to the State Mining and Geology Board. Based on observed site conditions and review of geological maps for the area, economic deposits of precious or base metals are not expected to underlie the Merced SUDP/SOI. According to the California Geological Survey, Aggregate Availability in California - Map Sheet 52, Updated 2006, and minor aggregate production occurs west and north of the City of Merced, but economic deposits of aggregate minerals are not mined within the immediate vicinity of the SUDP/SOI. Commercial deposits of oil and gas are not known to occur within the SUDP/SOI or vicinity.

According to the Merced County General Plan Background Report (June 21, 2007), very few traditional hard rock mines exist in the county. The County's mineral resources are almost all sand and gravel mining operations. Approximately 38 square miles of Merced County, in 10 aggregate resource areas (ARA), have been classified by the California Division of Mines and Geology for aggregate. The 10 identified resource areas contain an estimated 1.18 billion tons of concrete resources with approximately 574 million tons in Western Merced County and approximately 605 million tons in Eastern Merced County. Based on available production data and population projections, the Division of Mines and Geology estimated that 144 million tons of aggregate would be needed satisfy the projected demand for construction aggregate in the county through the year 2049. The available supply of aggregate in Merced County substantially exceeds the current and projected demand.

Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

There are no specific federal regulations applicable to mineral resources.

STATE

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

The California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) was enacted in response to land use conflicts between urban growth and essential mineral production. SMARA (Public Resources Code § 2710 et seq.; subsequently amended) is the primary regulation for onshore surface mining in the State. SMARA mandated that aggregate resources throughout the State be identified, mapped, and classified by the State geologist so that local governments could make

land use decisions in light of the presence of aggregate resources and the need to preserve access to those resources. Local jurisdictions are required to enact specific plan procedures to guide mineral conservation and extraction at particular sites, and to incorporate mineral resource management policies into their general plans. The Division of Mines and Geology has prepared Mineral Land Classification Maps for aggregate resources. The Mineral Land Classification Maps designate four different types of resource sensitivities. The four sensitivity types are:

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

LOCAL

General Plan Consistency

The City of Merced Vision 2030 General Plan, existing or proposed, does not contain policies relative to mineral resources.

3.10.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project is normally considered to have a potentially significant impact on the environment if it will:

- 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
- 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

3.10.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact #3.10-1: The proposed project could adversely affect the availability of a known mineral resource of value to the region and/or residents of the state

Discussion/Conclusion: Based on observed site conditions and review of geological maps for the area, economic deposits of precious or base metals are not known to occur in the Merced SUDP/SOI. According to the California Geological Survey, Aggregate Availability in California

- Map Sheet 52, Updated 2006 minor aggregate production occurs west and north of the City of Merced, but economic deposits of aggregate minerals are not mined within the immediate vicinity of the SUDP/SOI. The City of Merced will not be impacted by dust or noise based on the community's distance from mining operations. Therefore implementation of the proposed General Plan would have **no impact** on the availability of mineral resources or impact current of future mining operations.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact #3.10-2: The proposed project could adversely affect the availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan

Discussion/Conclusion: No Mineral Resource Zones or mineral resource recovery sites exist within the City of Merced or in the area designated for future expansion of the City (the SUDP/SOI). As a result the General Plan does not identify location of resource sectors, nor are policies for management of mineral resources identified. Implementation of the proposed General Plan would not adversely affect the availability of locally-important mineral resource recovery sites delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan. Therefore, there is **no impact**.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

The County's mineral resources are almost all sand and gravel mining operations. Approximately 38 square miles of Merced County, in 10 aggregate resource areas, have been classified by the California Division of Mines and Geology for aggregate. Development in these areas could preclude potential future mining by rendering this resource inaccessible or by establishing urban uses incompatible with mining operations. However, the vast majority of the County's potential mineral deposits are expected to remain available for potential mining into the foreseeable future, should site-specific evaluations determine them to be significant and economic. For these reasons, the loss of mineral resources as a result of development in the County would be a ***less than significant cumulative impact***.