

4.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

This section describes mineral resources on and near the Project site and evaluates the potential impacts on those resources. This section also discusses the existing setting of mineral resources within and near Menifee and sets forth the relevant regulatory requirements that apply to the Project site's impact on mineral resources. This section is based on information provided in the Open Space and Conservation Element of the City of Menifee's (City) General Plan,¹ the Multipurpose Open Space Element of the Riverside County General Plan,² California Geological Survey (CGS) data,³ and applicable provisions of the City's Municipal Code.⁴

4.12.1 Scoping

The City received ten comment letters during the public review period of the Notice of Preparation (NOP). For copies of the NOP comment letters, refer to **Appendix A-1** of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR). No comment letters were received that addressed mineral resources.

4.12.2 Methodology

Impacts to mineral resources were assessed based on the potential for the build out of the Specific Plan on the Project site to generate increased demand for such mineral resources in a manner that would contribute to a depletion of the resource or have an adverse physical effect on the environment. Information on mineral resources was compiled from published literature, maps, and aerial photographs. Geologic units and structural features were obtained from maps published by the CGS. Mineral resources impacts that could result from Project-related activities were evaluated qualitatively based on site conditions; expected construction practices; and materials, locations, and duration of construction and operational activities.

4.12.3 Existing Environmental Setting

Based on guidelines adopted by the CGS, areas known as Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) are classified according to the presence or absence of significant deposits, as defined below. These classifications indicate the potential for a specific area to contain significant mineral resources:

- **MRZ-1:** A Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present or likely to be present.

¹ City of Menifee. City of Menifee General Plan, Open Space and Conservation Element, Energy and Mineral. Website: <https://www.cityofmenifee.us/254/OSC-4-Energy-Mineral> (accessed August 5, 2022).

² County of Riverside. Riverside County General Plan Multipurpose Open Space Element. Pages OS-37 through OS-39. Website: https://planning.rctlma.org/Portals/14/genplan/general_Plan_2017/elements/OCT17/Ch05_MOSE_120815.pdf?ver=2017-10-11-102103-833 (accessed August 5, 2022).

³ California Department of Conservation. California Geological Survey, Minerals. Website: <https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/minerals> (accessed August 5, 2022).

⁴ City of Menifee Municipal Code. Table 1: County Ordinances Adopted. Website: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/menifee/latest/menifee_ca/0-0-0-3293 (accessed August 5, 2022).

- **MRZ-2:** A Mineral Resource Zone where adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or a likelihood of their presence and development should be controlled.
- **MRZ-3:** A Mineral Resource Zone where the significance of mineral deposits cannot be determined from the available data.
- **MRZ-4:** A Mineral Resource Zone where there is insufficient data to assign any other MRZ designation.
- **SZ Areas:** Containing unique or rare occurrences of rocks, minerals, or fossils that are of outstanding scientific significance shall be classified in this zone.
- **IRA Areas:** County or State Division of Mines and Geology Identified Areas where adequate production and information indicates that significant minerals are present.

4.12.3.1 Riverside County

Mineral extraction is an important component of Riverside County's economy and consists of areas where clay, limestone, iron, sand, and aggregates are collected. The County of Riverside (County) designates land within its jurisdiction as Open Space-Mineral Resources, which are areas that allow mineral extraction and processing facilities to be developed and areas held in reserve for future mineral extraction and processing. According to the Riverside County General Plan's Sun City/Menifee Valley Area Plan and Harvest Valley/Winchester Area Plan (where the Project site is located), there is no land that has an Open Space-Mineral Resources land use designation.^{5,6}

As of February 2015, Riverside County was classified with 83,267 acres of MRZ-1, 71,270 acres of MRZ-2 (including 22,114 acres MRZ-2a and 7,428 acres MRZ-2b), 1,336,723 acres of MRZ-3, and 1,751,892 acres of MRZ-4.⁷ Approximately 11,853 acres of MRZ-2 have been designated as regionally significant by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB). There is no land within Riverside County that the SMGB designates as locally important mineral recovery sites.⁸

4.12.3.2 City of Menifee

As identified in the Mineral Resources Section of the City's General Plan EIR, MRZ-3 is the predominant designation throughout the city and its sphere of influence, with approximately 22,017

⁵ County of Riverside. Riverside County General Plan, Harvest Valley/Winchester Area Plan. Table 2 Statistical Summary of Harvest Valley/Winchester Area Plan, Page 20. Website: https://planning.rctlma.org/Portals/14/genplan/GPA%202022/Compiled%20HVWAP_4-2022%20rev.pdf?ver=2022-06-27-145204-760 (accessed August 5, 2022).

⁶ County of Riverside. Riverside County General Plan, Sun City/Menifee Valley Area Plan. Table 2 Statistical Summary of Sun City/Menifee Valley Area Plan, Page 18. Website: https://planning.rctlma.org/Portals/14/genplan/GPA%202022/Compiled%20SCMVAP_4-2022%20rev.pdf?ver=2022-06-27-145207-400 (accessed August 5, 2022).

⁷ County of Riverside. Draft Program EIR No. 521, Section 4.14 Mineral Resources. Page 4.14-3. Website: https://planning.rctlma.org/Portals/14/genplan/general_plan_2015/DEIR%20521/DEIR%20No.%20521.pdf (accessed August 5, 2022).

⁸ Ibid.

acres designated as such. Approximately 308 acres located in the northwestern portion of the city along Murietta Road near Sun City are designated MRZ-1. The remainder of the city (7,488 acres) is designated as Urban Area. No portion of the city is designated as MRZ-2 or MRZ-4.

4.12.3.3 Project Site

A historical review of the Project site indicates the land has remained undeveloped since at least the mid-1900s. Two disturbed ephemeral streambeds and one freshwater marsh are located on the Project site.⁹ Prior to the 1980s, the surrounding areas were utilized for agriculture. Agricultural activities around the Project site were no longer present by 2005. Currently, grain crop production occurs on the Project site. There are no records that indicate the Project site was previously used as a mineral resource recovery site. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) identifies two inactive sand and gravel mines (Mine ID Nos. 91-33-0040 and 91-33-0053) located along Juniper Flats Road approximately 2.3 miles northeast of the Project site in Homeland.¹⁰ The Project site is mapped as MRZ-3, a designation assigned to areas that contain known or inferred mineral occurrences of unknown significance.¹¹

4.12.4 Regulatory Setting

4.12.4.1 Federal Regulations

No federal mineral resource-related regulations would apply because the Project site would not traverse any federal lands or require federal approvals related to mining.

4.12.4.2 State Regulations

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975. The State of California has recognized that mineral resources are essential to the needs of society and the economic well-being of the State. In 1975, the State Legislature passed the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA), Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 2710, et seq. The intent of SMARA is to promote production and conservation of mineral resources, minimize the environmental effects of mining, and ensure mined lands are reclaimed to conditions suitable for alternative uses. Reclaiming land for other uses once mining operations are completed is important for the general health, safety, and welfare of the community. Under SMARA, permits are required for all mining activities commencing operation on or after January 1, 1976. In addition, all new and existing mining operations are required to file a reclamation plan with the appropriate jurisdiction (such as the County of Riverside) to address how the land would be brought back to a productive status once mining operations cease. The County has been given the authority to permit or restrict mining operations within the county, adhering to the SMARA legislation. Under this authority, the County has set forth regulations for mineral

⁹ Rocks Biological Consulting. Menifee Valley Project Jurisdictional Delineation Report. Table 2. July 15, 2019 (Appendix D-2).

¹⁰ California Department of Conservation. Division of Mine Reclamation, Mines Online. 2016. Website: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/mol/index.html> (accessed August 4, 2022).

¹¹ City of Menifee. City of Menifee General Plan, Open Space and Conservation Element. Exhibit OSC-3. September 2013.

extraction and reclamation within unincorporated areas of Riverside County via Ordinance No. 555 (Implementing SMARA in Riverside County).

SMARA also requires every lead agency, such as the City, within which a mineral resource's economic value has been classified by the State Geologist or has been designated as having regional economic significance by the SMGB, to establish Mineral Resource Management Policies (MRMPs) for the mineral resources in its General Plan.

Under current SMARA statutes (PRC Section 2763), prior to permitting a use that would threaten the potential to extract minerals in an area designated by the SMGB as having mineral resources of regional or statewide significance, the City must prepare a statement specifying its reasons for permitting the proposed use. In it, the City must consider its MRMPs, balance the mineral values against alternative land uses, and consider the importance of the minerals to their market region as a whole and not just their importance to the city area. This process is designed to ensure that decision-makers weigh the economic and environmental value of nonrenewable mineral resources when determining whether or not to protect existing mineral resources.

4.12.4.3 Regional Regulations

County of Riverside Ordinance No. 555. Ordinance No. 555 implements SMARA and addresses the importance of mineral extraction to the economic well-being of Riverside County. It regulates all surface mining operations in the unincorporated portions of Riverside County, as authorized by SMARA, to ensure that:

- The production and conservation of minerals is encouraged while considering and balancing values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, and aesthetic enjoyment and, at the same time, eliminating or minimizing the residual hazards to public health and safety.
- The adverse effects of surface mining operations are prevented or minimized and that mined lands are reclaimed to a useable condition readily adaptable for alternative land use.
- The reclamation of mined lands is carried out in a way that permits the continued mining of minerals.

This ordinance is intended to ensure the conservation of mineral resources within Riverside County and has been adopted by the City of Menifee pursuant to City Municipal Code, Table 1: *County Ordinances Adopted*.

4.12.4.4 Local Regulations

City of Menifee General Plan, Open Space and Conservation Element. The Open Space and Conservation Element of the City's General Plan describes existing mineral resources within the city. The following goals and policies apply to the proposed Project.

Goal OSC-4: Efficient and environmentally appropriate use and management of energy and mineral resources to ensure their availability for future generations.

Policy OSC-4.4: Require that any future mining activities be in compliance with the State Mining Reclamation Act, federal and state environmental regulations, and local ordinances.

Policy OSC-4.5: Limit the impacts of mining operations on the city's natural open space, biological and scenic resources, cultural resources and landscapes, and any adjacent land uses.

4.12.5 Thresholds of Significance

The City has not established local California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) significance thresholds as described in Section 15064.7 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. Therefore, significance determinations utilized in this section are from Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines*. According to Section II of Appendix G to the *State CEQA Guidelines*, the proposed Project would result in a significant impact to mineral resources if the proposed Project or any Project-related component would:

Threshold 4.12-1: Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the State.

Threshold 4.12-2: 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.

4.12.6 Project Impact Analysis

4.12.6.1 Loss of Availability of Mineral Resource Site of Regional or State Value

Threshold 4.12-1: Would the project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the State?

On-Site Improvements. The City's General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element designates the Project site as MRZ-3. According to the mineral resource zones that are classified by the CGS under the California Department of Conservation, lands classified as MRZ-3 are areas where the significance of mineral deposits cannot be determined from the available data. MRZ-3 accounts for nearly three-quarters of land in the city, most of which is developed or entitled by the City to be developed in the future. Additionally, there are no known significant mineral resources designated in the city, and it is unlikely that significant mineral resources would be designated in the city in the future.¹²

The City of Menifee General Plan Land Use Map designates the Project site as Menifee Valley Ranch Specific Plan No. 301, which permits parks, open space, greenbelt, and residential uses at various densities including medium high (5.1–8 dwelling units per acre) and medium (2.1–5 dwelling units per acre). **Section 3.1.1** of this EIR summarizes the existing surrounding land uses, General Plan land use designations, and zoning designations of properties in proximity to the Project site. Mineral resources extraction is not a use compatible with the existing on-site and surrounding land uses, nor

¹² City of Menifee. City of Menifee General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report. State Clearinghouse #2012071033. Page 5.11-5. September 2013.

is the Project site sufficient in size or location to support productive or cost-effective mineral extraction. Therefore, implementation of the proposed Project would not 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. **No impact** would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: No Impact.

Regulatory Compliance Measures and Mitigation Measures: No Regulatory Compliance Measures or Mitigation Measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: No Impact.

Off-Site Improvements.

Construction. Implementation of the Project would result in physical disturbance to up to 59.0 acres for the installation of off-site improvements including roadway improvements to existing roadways (e.g. Menifee Road, SR-74, and Briggs Road), utility connections (e.g. water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, internet, and natural gas), landscaping, and construction of a non-vehicular bridge to connect the Specific Plan site to the Heritage Lake community to the south. The widening of these existing roadways would be in conformance with the City's General Plan Circulation Element. Off-site improvement areas along SR-74 and Briggs Road are designated MRZ-3, and the off-site improvement area along Menifee Road is designated Urban Area, which is not considered an MRZ classification. As discussed above, lands classified as MRZ-3 are areas where the significance of mineral deposits cannot be determined from the available data. MRZ-3 accounts for nearly three-quarters of land in the city, most of which is developed or entitled by the City to be developed in the future. Additionally, there are no known significant mineral resources designated in the city, and it is unlikely that significant mineral resources would be designated in the city in the future.¹³ Therefore, construction of off-site improvements would not 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. **No impact** would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Operation. The operation of the off-site improvements includes public roadways that are consistent with the City's General Plan Circulation Element. Therefore, mineral resource extraction would not occur and is not planned to occur within off-site improvement areas. Therefore, the off-site improvements have **no impact** on mineral resources, and no mitigation is required.

Off-Site Roadway Improvements. Implementation of the Project would also result in off-site roadway improvements to address traffic impacts in conflict with the General Plan Circulation Element policies that strive to maintain desired LOS. These roadway improvements, which include widening and additional turn lanes as required, include Matthews Road/Case Road (between McLaughlin Road and Ethanac Road), McLaughlin Road (between Matthews Road/Case Road and Menifee Road), and McCall Boulevard (between Encanto Drive and Menifee Road). These roadway improvements were identified in the General Plan Circulation Element and included in the Final

¹³ Ibid.

General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) certified by the City on December 18, 2013 (Certified 2013 EIR).

The Certified 2013 EIR indicates that no known significant mineral resources have been designated in the City and neither the Riverside County General Plan nor the City's General Plan designate mining sites in the City. As such, the City's General Plan concluded that based on current MRZ designations, it is unlikely that significant mineral resources would be designated in Menifee in the foreseeable future; therefore, buildout of the General Plan, which includes the off-site roadway improvements, would not cause a loss of availability of known significant mineral resources. Therefore, the off-site roadway improvements would have **no impact** on mineral resources, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination Prior to Mitigation: No Impact.

Regulatory Compliance Measures and Mitigation Measures: No Regulatory Compliance or Mitigation Measures are required.

Significance Determination After Mitigation: No Impact.

4.12.6.2 Loss of Availability of Mineral Resource Site Delineated on a Local Plan

Threshold 4.12-2: **Would the project 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?**

On-Site Improvements. There are no active mineral resource recovery sites mapped within Menifee on the Mines Online map maintained by the California Office of Mine Reclamation. Two inactive sand and gravel mines, Mine ID Nos. 91-33-0040 and 91-33-0053, are located along Juniper Flats Road approximately 2.3 miles northeast of the Project site in Homeland.¹⁴ Additionally, according to the California Department of Conservation Geologic Energy Management Division (Cal GEM) Well Finder map, the Project site is not located in or near any oil fields, and there are no oil well facilities or underground gas storage facilities on or near the Project site.¹⁵

According to the City's General Plan EIR, the Project site and vicinity are not located on land where known mineral resources exist or are likely to exist, and significant mineral resources are unlikely to be designated in the city through build out of the General Plan.¹⁶ Mineral resources extraction would conflict with the intent of the City General Plan, which does not identify the site as an area for mineral resource recovery. Implementation of the proposed Project would not 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. **No impact** would occur, and no mitigation is required.

¹⁴ California Department of Conservation. Division of Mine Reclamation, Mines Online. 2016. Website: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/mol/index.html> (accessed August 4, 2022).

¹⁵ California Department of Conservation. Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) Well Finder. 2020. Website: <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/doggr/wellfinder/#openModal/-117.08474/33.72308/13> (accessed August 4, 2022).

¹⁶ City of Menifee. City of Menifee General Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report. State Clearinghouse #2012071033. Figure 5.11-1 and Page 5.11-5. September 2013.

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: No Impact.

Regulatory Compliance Measures and Mitigation Measures: No Regulatory Compliance Measures or Mitigation Measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: No Impact.

Off-Site Improvements.

Construction. Implementation of the Project would result in physical disturbance to up to 59.0 acres for the installation of off-site improvements including roadway improvements to existing roadways (e.g. Menifee Road, SR-74, and Briggs Road), utility connections (e.g. water, sewer, stormwater, electricity, internet, and natural gas), landscaping, and construction of a non-vehicular bridge to connect the Specific Plan site to the Heritage Lake community to the south. The widening of these existing roadways would be in conformance with the City's General Plan Circulation Element. Additionally, there are no active mineral resource recovery sites mapped within Menifee. Therefore, construction of these improvements would have **no impact** on a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. No mitigation is required.

Operation. The operation of the off-site improvements would be in conformance with the City's General Plan Circulation Element. Therefore, mineral resource extraction would conflict with the intent of the City's General Plan for build out of these public roadways. Operation of off-site improvements would have **no impact** on a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. No mitigation is required.

Off-Site Roadway Improvements. Implementation of the Project would also result in off-site roadway improvements to address traffic impacts in conflict with the General Plan Circulation Element policies that strive to maintain desired LOS. These roadway improvements, which include widening and additional turn lanes as required, include Matthews Road/Case Road (between McLaughlin Road and Ethanac Road), McLaughlin Road (between Matthews Road/Case Road and Menifee Road), and McCall Boulevard (between Encanto Drive and Menifee Road). These roadway improvements were identified in the General Plan Circulation Element and included in the Final General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) certified by the City on December 18, 2013 (Certified 2013 EIR).

The Certified 2013 EIR indicates that no known significant mineral resources have been designated in the City and neither the Riverside County General Plan nor the City's General Plan designate mining sites in the City. As such, the City's General Plan concluded that based on current MRZ designations, it is unlikely that significant mineral resources would be designated in Menifee in the foreseeable future and buildout of the General Plan, which includes the off-site roadway improvements, would not cause a loss of availability of known significant mineral resources. Therefore, the off-site roadway improvements would have **no impact** on mineral resources, and no mitigation is required.

Significance Determination Prior to Mitigation: No Impact.

Regulatory Compliance Measures and Mitigation Measures: No Regulatory Compliance or Mitigation Measures are required.

Significance Determination After Mitigation: No Impact.

4.12.7 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are the incremental effects of an individual project when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects within the cumulative impact area for mineral resources. The cumulative geographic study area for mineral resources is the city and Riverside County. Implementation of the Project would not result in the loss of known mineral resources; however, the related projects in the city have the potential to develop on or near land that is designated as an MRZ-2 or -3 or delineated as a locally important mineral resource area.

The analysis presented above indicates that the Project is located in an area designated as an MRZ-3; however, the Project site has never been used as a mineral resource recovery site. Additionally, neither the City of Menifee General Plan nor the Riverside County General Plan have delineated the Project site as a locally important mineral resource recovery site. For these reasons, implementation of the Project would not cumulatively contribute to the loss of known mineral resources or the development of a site that has been delineated as a locally important mineral resource recovery area by the City or County. As such, implementation of the Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact.

Pursuant to SMARA requirements, all Cities and Counties are required to incorporate into their General Plan mapped designations of mineral resource zones that are approved by the State Mining Board. Both the City of Menifee and County of Riverside General Plans provide goals, policies, and programs related to mineral resources and locally important mineral resource recovery sites to ensure compatibility between future development and existing and future mineral resource recovery operations. Each related project would be subject to environmental review (and mitigation measures as applicable) and jurisdictional goals, policies, and programs related to mineral resources to ensure they are not located on land that contains known mineral resources or is designated as a locally important mineral resource recovery site. The environmental review, any applicable mitigation measures, and jurisdictional goals/policies/programs would reduce the cumulative impact for mineral resources to a **less than cumulatively significant** level.

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