

11. Mineral Resources

11.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Mineral resources in Ventura County consist of aggregate resources, more commonly known as construction grade sand and gravel, as well as petroleum resources in the form of oil and gas deposits. There are other mineral resources extracted in Ventura County, but they are not designated as significant by the state nor do they play a major role in the County's economy.

11.1.1 Aggregate Resources

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) was enacted by the California legislature to promote the conservation of the state's mineral resources, ensure adequate reclamation of mined lands, and prevent or minimize the negative impacts of surface mining to public health, property, and the environment. The State Division of Mine Reclamation was created to provide a measure of oversight for local governments as they administer SMARA within their respective jurisdictions. Among other provisions, SMARA requires the State Geologist to classify land in California into *Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs)* according to the known or inferred mineral potential of the land as determined by geological study. *MRZ* designated lands in Ventura County are delineated in Figure 8-9 in Section 8.4 of the Ventura County General Plan Background Report ("Background Report") and *County View* and the Ventura County *Resource Management Agency Geographic Information System (RMA GIS) Viewer*.

The *MRZs* have been established based on the presence or absence of significant sand and gravel deposits and crushed rock source area, e.g., mineral products used in the production of cement. The *MRZ-2* classification applies to lands where mineral resources are present. For a mineral deposit to be considered significant and therefore eligible for the *MRZ-2* classification, it must meet criteria established by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) for material quality, marketability, and economic value. *MRZ-2* is classified for Portland Cement Concrete construction aggregate, which is subject to a series of specifications to ensure the manufacture of strong durable concrete. Construction grade aggregate (sand, gravel, and crushed rock) plays an important role in the economy, particularly the building and paving industries.

The Oak Ridge Hills extend westward from the Los Angeles County line from Simi Valley to the area between the cities of Moorpark and Fillmore. Several areas along this trend have been designated as *MRZ-2* lands by the SMGB. Aggregate is extracted from the ancient streambed deposits that crop out in these hills at several existing mining facilities. These mining facilities are the primary source of aggregate in Ventura County.

The County has determined that lands classified *MRZ-2* (or otherwise designated as areas of statewide or regional significance for mineral resources) should be protected from incompatible land uses that would inhibit extraction of or access to the available mineral resources. The *MRZ-2* lands are identified in the Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance with a Mineral Resource Protection (MRP) overlay zone.

11.1.2 Petroleum Resources

Petroleum reserve areas are located in the northwest, northeast, central and south-coastal quadrants of the county, as well as offshore (see Figure 8-10 in Section 8.4 of the Background Report). Offshore production within three miles of the coast is under the jurisdiction of the state. Production is under federal jurisdiction beyond three miles. The California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) is the primary state agency that regulates the oil, natural gas, and geothermal industries. While the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is the primary federal agency that regulates the oil and gas industry, a number of other federal agencies oversee specific components of the oil and gas industry, including but not limited to the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

11.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis and evaluated using the following thresholds of significance as specified below.

MIN-1 A project may have a significant impact if it would result in the loss of availability of a) a known aggregate resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state, or b) a locally important aggregate resource recovery site.

MIN-2 A project may have a significant impact if it would hamper or preclude extraction of, or access to, locally important petroleum resources, or would otherwise result in the loss of availability of a known petroleum resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

11.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

Guidance on addressing the questions from the Initial Study Checklist are provided below. In order to determine whether project impacts exceed or meet the criteria of the thresholds of significance in Section 11.2, the level of impact shall be evaluated based on the appropriate assessment methodologies as outlined below.

(a) Would the project result in the loss of availability of (a) a known aggregate resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state, or (b) a locally important aggregate resource recovery site?

Determinations of impact significance of individual and cumulative impacts requires a case-by-case determination based on the project's proposed use and its location relative to aggregate resource areas, as well as past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Although *MRZs* are depicted in Figure 8-9 in Section 8.4 of the Background Report and on the MRP overlay zone as depicted on *County View* and *RMA GIS Viewer*, project impacts shall be analyzed based on the most current resource maps available at the time of analysis. The following considerations should be taken into account to determine the significance of impacts:

If the project is not within the MRP overlay zone, and does not abut land within the MRP overlay zone, then the project would have a less than significant impact on extraction of aggregate resources.

If the project is located on or abuts land within the MRP overlay zone or land subject to a surface mining Conditional Use Permit (CUP), then the California Geological Survey shall be consulted to determine the level of impact.

SMARA requires that “[p]rior to permitting a use that would threaten the potential to extract minerals” in an area that contains mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance, the *Lead Agency*, in addition to preparing the environmental document, is also required to prepare a statement specifying its reasons for permitting the proposed use. In addition to public circulation, this statement must be provided to the State Geologist and the SMGB for review and comment. See Sections 2762 and 2763 of SMARA.

(b) Would the project hamper or preclude extraction of, or access to, locally important petroleum resources, or otherwise result in the loss of availability of a known petroleum resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

Although petroleum resource areas are depicted on the petroleum resources map (Figure 8-10) in Section 8.4 of the Background Report, project impacts shall be analyzed based on the most current resource maps available at the time of analysis. Existing oil and gas exploration and production CUP areas are depicted on the *RMA GIS Viewer*. The following considerations should be taken into account to determine the significance of impacts:

If the project is not located on or *adjacent* to any known petroleum resource area subject to an existing oil and gas exploration and production CUP, then the project would have a less than significant impact on the extraction of petroleum resources.

If the project site is located on or *adjacent* to a known petroleum resource area subject to an existing oil and gas exploration and production CUP, then CalGEM shall be consulted to determine the level of impact.

Otherwise, determinations of impact significance must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Determinations of significance of cumulative impacts must be determined on a case-by-case basis in consideration of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects.

11.4 RESOURCES & REFERENCES

| Source | Managing Agency/Organization | Online Access |
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| Resources | | |
| Ventura County CEQA Implementation Manual | Ventura County Resource Management Agency (RMA) Planning Division | PDF Website |
| Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines: Introduction | Ventura County RMA Planning Division | PDF Website |
| Ventura County Initial Study Checklist Template | Ventura County RMA Planning Division | PDF Website |
| References | | |
| County View | Ventura County Geographic Information Systems | Website |

Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines

| Source | Managing Agency/Organization | Online Access |
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| Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) | California Department of Conservation | Website |
| Ventura County General Plan Background Report, Chapter 8 | Ventura County RMA Planning Division | PDF Website |
| Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance | Ventura County RMA Planning Division | PDF |
| Ventura County RMA Geographic Information System Viewer | Ventura County Information Technology Services | Website |