

2.0 Introduction to the Environmental Analysis

This section contains an introduction to the environmental analysis, including information on the scoping process and a description of the environmental setting. The reader is referred to the individual technical sections (**Sections 2.1 through 2.14**) for topic-specific assumptions, methodologies, and significance criteria used in the impact analysis. Please see **Section 3.1** for an analysis of impacts associated with the Sphere of Influence (SOI) update and **Section 3.2** for a discussion of potential cumulative impacts.

The environmental topics that are addressed in this chapter are as follows:

- Section 2.1 – Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Section 2.2 – Air Quality
- Section 2.3 – Biological Resources
- Section 2.4 – Cultural Resources
- Section 2.5 – Geology and Soils
- Section 2.6 – Greenhouse Gases
- Section 2.7 – Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Section 2.8 – Hydrology and Water Quality
- Section 2.9 – Land Use and Planning
- Section 2.10 – Noise
- Section 2.11 – Public Services and Recreation
- Section 2.12 – Traffic and Circulation
- Section 2.13 – Utilities and Service Systems
- Section 2.14 – Wildfire Hazards

Notice of Preparation

In accordance with Section 15082 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the City circulated the NOP beginning September 11, 2015, and ending October 12, 2015. The NOP was circulated to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit input as to the scope and content of the EIR.

The City also held two public scoping meetings on September 24, 2015, to receive comments. Concerns raised in response to the NOP and at scoping meetings were considered during preparation of the EIR. The NOP, copies of the NOP comment letters, and scoping meeting notes are included in **Appendix 2.0**.

Table 2-1 summarizes the key issues presented in each of the NOP comment letters received.

Table 2-1 NOP Comment Letters Summary

Comment Letter	Key Issues
<p>California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW); Gail K. Stevens, Environmental Program Manager; October 16, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expresses concern over annexation and its impacts on the SC-MSCP and the draft NC-MSCP. ▪ Recommends the DEIR provide analysis of a range of feasible alternatives including one that is consistent with the draft NC-MSCP conservation goals for the PAMA. ▪ States that based on initial biological surveys for the project, the site contains several sensitive species, some of which are federally and/or state listed. ▪ Provides general comments and/or recommendations on jurisdictional delineation, on-site mitigation measures, and habitat connectivity.
<p>City of San Diego; Tara Lieberman, Associate Planner; September 23, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expresses concern about water quality; specifically, the increase in salt and nutrient load with project implementation resulting from increased pesticide and fertilizer use. Additional concerns include project impacts to circulation, biological resources, and open space. ▪ Recommends that additional evaluation be conducted regarding the applicability of the SGMA. ▪ Indicates that West Zoo Road is not a public road. States that several neighboring properties (which are partially owned by SHR) have an easement over City land to use West Zoo Road, and that the Safari Park currently uses the roadway for employee access. The City recognizes the easement rights of these neighboring properties to utilize West Zoo Road for purposes of private access. ▪ Explains how the project will connect to the City of Escondido wastewater system.
<p>County of San Diego; Joe Farace, Planning Manager; October 12, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests attendance at any meetings with the City of Escondido and LAFCO regarding the City's Sphere of Influence update. ▪ Recommends that proposed project trails be open and available to the general public, improved trails be dedicated to a public agency as trail easements, and trails be designated as non-motorized multi-use. ▪ Outlines stormwater and drainage requirements. ▪ Discusses the County's Vector Control Program (VCP) and states the need for the EIR to address possible mosquito breeding sources created by the project. ▪ Requests that the EIR analyze how the proposed reassignment would affect the County's approved South County MSCP and the draft North County MSCP.
<p>City of Escondido Fire Department; La Vona Koretke; September 4, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lists fire conditions for the proposed project.
<p>San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO); Robert Barry, Local Government Analyst; October 12, 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ States the project is not located in the City of Escondido's adopted Sphere of Influence. ▪ Discusses annexation and required LAFCO discretionary approvals.

Table 2-1, continued

Comment Letter	Key Issues
San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); Susan Baldwin, Senior Regional Planner; October 12, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests Transportation Demand Management (TDM) be integrated in project design to encourage the use of alternative travel modes that can assist with relieving traffic congestion. Lists several resources to aid in integrating TDM measures into project design.
San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority; Shawna Anderson, Principal Planner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests to be added to the Draft EIR distribution list.
US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Karen Goebel, Assistant Field Supervisor; October 9, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expresses concern that project development design and annexation of lands within PAMA are not consistent with the planning and conservation goals of the Hodges Reservoir-San Pasqual Valley Core Resource Area of the Subarea Plan and draft North County Multiple Species Conservation Program (NC-MSCP). ▪ Recommends that the EIR address impacts to the Subarea Plan and draft NC-MSCP.
Kurt and Josie Ackermann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ States that the proposed project would destroy coastal sage scrub habitat, home to native vegetation (manzanita, scrub oak, many species of wildflowers, and groves of Engelmann oaks) and home to various animal species (foxes, deer, gnatcatchers, horned toads, rattlesnakes, mud swallow, coyotes, kangaroo rats, mountain lions, etc.) that currently live in the area designated for development.
Andrea Lohneiss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discusses concerns regarding water availability, emergency services, and circulation, particularly of the residents walking along Rockwood Road.
Bob Lohneiss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests safety analysis of using West Zoo Road versus Rockwood as the primary and emergency access for the project site and emergency egress and ingress access for fire evacuation.
Delano & Delano; October 12, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lists the issues that should be addressed by the EIR. ▪ Requests a copy of the DEIR and all notices regarding the proposed project.
Donna Bird; October 9, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about the loss of habitat to wildlife that live in the proposed project site location.
Edwin van Doorn; September 22, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about project impacts to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Endangered species and/or protected habitats. ○ Evacuation routes, particularly during wildfire scenarios. ○ Water supplies. ○ Rockwood Road and the increase in project-associated impacts.
Endangered Habitats League; Dan Silver, Executive Director; August 21, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opposes the proposed project unless it is amended. ▪ States that two-thirds of the project site lies in the Preapproved Mitigation Area for the MSCP and one-third in the draft Preapproved Mitigation Area of the North County MSCP.
Johnson and Sedlack, Attorneys at Law; October 7, 2015; Raymond Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests all public notices regarding the proposed project.

Table 2-1, continued

Comment Letter	Key Issues
Lance Criley; October 12, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ States that the project site is located in a mapped very high fire hazard zone; the commenter has personally experienced three fires since moving into the area. ▪ Requests an exhaustive analysis of the dangers of bringing more residents to the area. ▪ Requests that an objective study be conducted to verify that “high-end” housing will help Escondido’s economy.
Michael Greer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ States that smell from the planned sewer plant can potentially migrate onto his property. ▪ States that project-associated traffic increases during project construction and implementation will increase the danger to schoolchildren walking and biking to and from school on Rockwood Road. ▪ Requests all updates on the proposed project.
Neil Greenwood; October 5, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests that a study be conducted to determine the total costs to operate the existing and planned pump stations, with a recalculation of customers’ bills for those who require/use pumps and those who do not.
Rancho Vistamonte Garden Society; Michael Parris; October 2, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raises several issues that relate to various areas of study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The proposed project will negatively affect sight lines to the valley and golf course. ○ The dust generated by the project during construction will negatively impact air quality. ○ The proposed project will result in noise impacts associated with construction and the EIR needs to study the effects associated with it. ○ The additional development in an already underserved area will result in the need for additional fire and police services. ○ The existing infrastructure is undersized and incapable of serving the additional traffic associated with project construction and implementation. ○ The increase in traffic associated with the proposed project on Rockwood Road is a safety issue for the children walking to school.
Scott Graves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requests that future development with the entire 800 units zoned as part of SPA #4 (which includes the proposed project site and Rancho Vistamonte, among others) be considered when calculating level of service or vehicle miles traveled.
Stan and Gloria Yalof; October 1, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have questions regarding Zoo Road access.

Table 2-1, continued

Comment Letter	Key Issues
Suzanne and Dallas Keck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lists traffic-related items that should be studied and analyzed in the EIR. ▪ Inquires what type of retaining wall will be constructed and if any, whether it will fit in with the aesthetic environment. ▪ Requests that the EIR analyze both construction and long-term air quality impacts; air and odor/smell and chemical pollution from the proposed sewage treatment plant and how it will affect communities downwind from the treatment plant; and additional pollution resulting from 13,000 trips per day down Rockwood Road). ▪ Inquires whether all the tribes have been consulted and notified and asks how the cultural artifacts be handled. ▪ Inquiries regarding grading impact. ▪ Inquires whether the project will require an update to the Water Master Plan. ▪ Inquires what the noise level will be for the proposed sewage treatment plant. ▪ Requests analysis on police response times. ▪ Lists items related to traffic that should be studied and analyzed in the EIR.
Bill Leininger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerns about project impacts related to fire safety and emergency egress, natural habitat impacts, and demands on the local infrastructure.
Thomas S. Kamman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Concerned about project impacts related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Traffic congestion along Cloverdale and Rockwood roads ○ Biological impacts

Approach to the Project Analysis

Sections 2.1 through **2.14** of this EIR contain a description of current setting conditions (including applicable regulatory setting), an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental effects resulting from implementation of the proposed project, identification of measures that mitigate the identified significant environmental effects, and, if applicable, identification of whether significant environmental effects of the proposed project would remain after application of proposed mitigation measures. The individual technical sections of the EIR follow the format described below. Thresholds of significance and methodologies used in the analysis approach (specific to each environmental issue area) are provided in **Sections 2.1** through **2.14** of this EIR.

Existing Conditions

This subsection includes a description of the physical conditions associated with the technical area of discussion, consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15125. As identified above, the existing setting is based on conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released. Environmental effects are determined by comparing the existing environmental setting with buildout of the proposed project.

Regulatory Framework

This subsection describes applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans, policies, laws, and regulations that apply to the technical area of discussion.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Impacts and Mitigation Measures subsection of each technical section identifies direct and indirect environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project and identifies proposed measures to mitigate environmental effects, where applicable.

A statement is included in each impact discussion identifying the level of significance the impact will have before and after mitigation. Standards of significance are identified and utilized to determine whether identified environmental effects are considered “significant” and require the application of mitigation measures. Each environmental impact analysis is supported by substantial evidence included in the discussion.

Feasible mitigation measures that could minimize significant adverse impacts are discussed, after which the impact discussion notes whether the impact has been mitigated to a less than significant level or remains significant and unavoidable. CEQA requires that mitigation to lessen the environmental impact be feasible. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1) states, “An EIR shall describe feasible measures which could minimize significant adverse impacts...”

Feasible is defined as “capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, social, and technological factors” (Public Resources Code Section 21061.1). In order to assist the reader in tracking between impact significance conclusions and related mitigation measures, significance assessments and the associated mitigation measures have correlating numbers and letters.

Environmental Setting

Section 15125(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines requires that an EIR include a description of the physical environmental conditions in the vicinity of the project, as they exist at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) is published. The CEQA Guidelines also specify that this description of the physical environmental conditions is to serve as the baseline physical conditions by which a lead agency determines whether impacts of a project are considered significant.

The environmental setting of the project site and surroundings are described below. In general, these setting discussions describe conditions as they existed when the NOP for the project was released on September 11, 2015. Additional details pertinent to existing conditions for each environmental topic are included in **Sections 2.1** through **2.14**.

Regional

The character of the community of Escondido and the surrounding region is influenced by a number of lakes and large natural habitat areas, visually unique historic and cultural resources, hillsides and ridgelines, and outlying agricultural lands. The city lies within the San Pasqual Valley, which generally trends east/west. The main valley varies in width from approximately 2.5 miles in the western portion to less than 1 mile in the eastern portion.

The valley is surrounded by rugged terrain and rolling hills that rise to approximately 4,200 feet above mean sea level (amsl). The surrounding hillsides and ridgelines are prominent in views from the valley floor and are considered a key element contributing to the visual character of the region. The city offers a historic downtown and urban core area located along the valley floor, with densities reducing as one moves outward to the surrounding hillsides where agricultural uses are present.

In the region surrounding the project site, several large natural expanses of open space have been preserved and buffer the city from surrounding communities. The Daley Ranch Conservation Bank is located in the northeastern portion of the city and encompasses 3,058 acres of open space supporting chaparral and Diegan coastal sage scrub, stands of coast live oak and Engelmann oak woodland, wetlands, and non-native grasslands, combined with rolling topography and rock outcroppings, and a number of historical structures.

The Dixon Lake Recreation Area lies within the Daley Ranch Conservation Bank and is a regional and community park. The area includes a water treatment facility and offers campgrounds, picnic areas, recreational concessions, and trails, with the majority of the property preserved as natural open space. An additional 103 acres located adjacent to and east of Daley Ranch, known as Stanley Peak, have also been preserved for use as open space.

Kit Carson Park is an approximately 200-acre regional and community park of historical significance located in eastern Escondido and offers recreational amenities, natural habitat, and visual features. Additionally, the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park (San Diego River Park) serves as a regional park extending approximately 55 miles from just east of Volcan Mountain in eastern San Diego County to the Pacific Ocean at the City of Del Mar. It encompasses over 80,000 acres of open space lands for recreational purposes and the protection of visual, cultural and historic, and biological resources.

Lake Wohlford and the Lake Wohlford Reservoir, to the west of the city, consist of over 1,600 acres of scenic resources including ridgelines, rock outcroppings, and natural habitats such as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and riparian vegetation.

Several creeks, including Kit Carson Creek and Cloverdale Creek, traverse the city and surrounding lands. The main stream course is Escondido Creek, which flows from Lake Wohlford southwesterly through the city to San Elijo Canyon and ultimately to the Pacific Ocean at San Elijo Lagoon.

Project Site Characteristics

The existing environmental setting of the project site includes hills of coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral, which are bisected by dry riparian drainages that support oaks, sycamores, and cottonwood, among other tree species. The project site is located along the foothills that form a part of the eastern boundary of the San Pasqual Valley. The valley has an east/west orientation with elevations ranging from approximately 400 feet amsl in the southern portion to approximately 1,800 feet amsl in the northeastern portion. Similar to other surrounding lands in the project vicinity, large rock outcroppings are scattered throughout and contribute to the overall character of the site. Refer to **Figures 2-2A** and **2-2B, Representative Site Photos**, which include views of existing on-site conditions.

Habitat on-site and in surrounding buffer areas consists of the following vegetation communities: agriculture, cactus scrub, rock outcroppings/bushy spikemoss mats, non-native grassland, Diegan coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, deer weed scrub, western ragweed meadow, oak woodland, oak riparian woodland, mulefat scrub, disturbed habitat, and developed lands.

On-site soils consist of a series of sandy loam, coarse sandy loam, sand, and steep gullied land. Sandy loam and coarse sandy loam soils in the following soil series are present: Cienega Fallbrook rocky, sandy loams with 30 to 65 percent eroded slopes and Cienega very rocky, coarse sandy loams with 30 to 70 percent slopes. Runoff is described as moderate to rapid; the potential for erosion to occur is considered to be moderate for these soil types.

The project site generally drains to the southwest toward the existing Eagle Crest Golf Course and the adjacent Rancho San Pasqual development and is divided into two major drainage areas. The northwestern drainage area includes approximately 415 acres. Runoff from this area drains through several arroyos and crosses the westerly property boundary at several locations. The southeastern drainage area includes approximately 1,925 acres. Runoff drains through a valley to an existing triple box culvert beneath Rockwood Road. The site does not lie within a flood zone identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Surrounding Land Uses

The Safari Highlands Ranch project site is bordered by developed lands to the west and southwest. Largely undeveloped lands border the site to the east. To the north and south are scattered rural residential uses and estate homes on larger lots. **Figure 2-1, Aerial Photograph**, depicts these land uses in relation to the site boundary.

The Rancho San Pasqual neighborhood, with 580 residential lots, and the Eagle Crest Golf Club are located to the northwest. The Rancho Vistamonte neighborhood, with 80 residential lots, is located adjacent to the southwest of the project site and lies within Specific Plan Area (SPA) 4. The 1,800-acre San Diego Zoo Safari Park lies to the south and is separated from the project site by undeveloped and sparsely developed lands. Additionally, San Pasqual Union School is located approximately 0.5 mile to the west of the site, along Rockwood Road.

Draft EIR and Public Review

A public notice of the availability of this Draft EIR has been issued to initiate a minimum 45-day public comment period. The City also filed a Notice of Completion (NOC) with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to inform all applicable state agencies of the EIR's availability.

During the public comment period, comments on the Draft EIR will be accepted via mail and e-mail. All comments or questions regarding the Draft EIR should be addressed to Project Manager John Helmer at the address below and must be received before the close of the comment period.

John Helmer, Project Manager
City of Escondido Planning Division
201 N. Broadway, Escondido, CA 92025
safarihighlands@escondido.org

Response to Comments and Final EIR

Following the public review period, a Final EIR (FEIR) will be prepared. The Final EIR will respond to written comments received during the public review period. Commenting parties will be provided with copies of the responses to their comments at least 10 days prior to EIR certification.

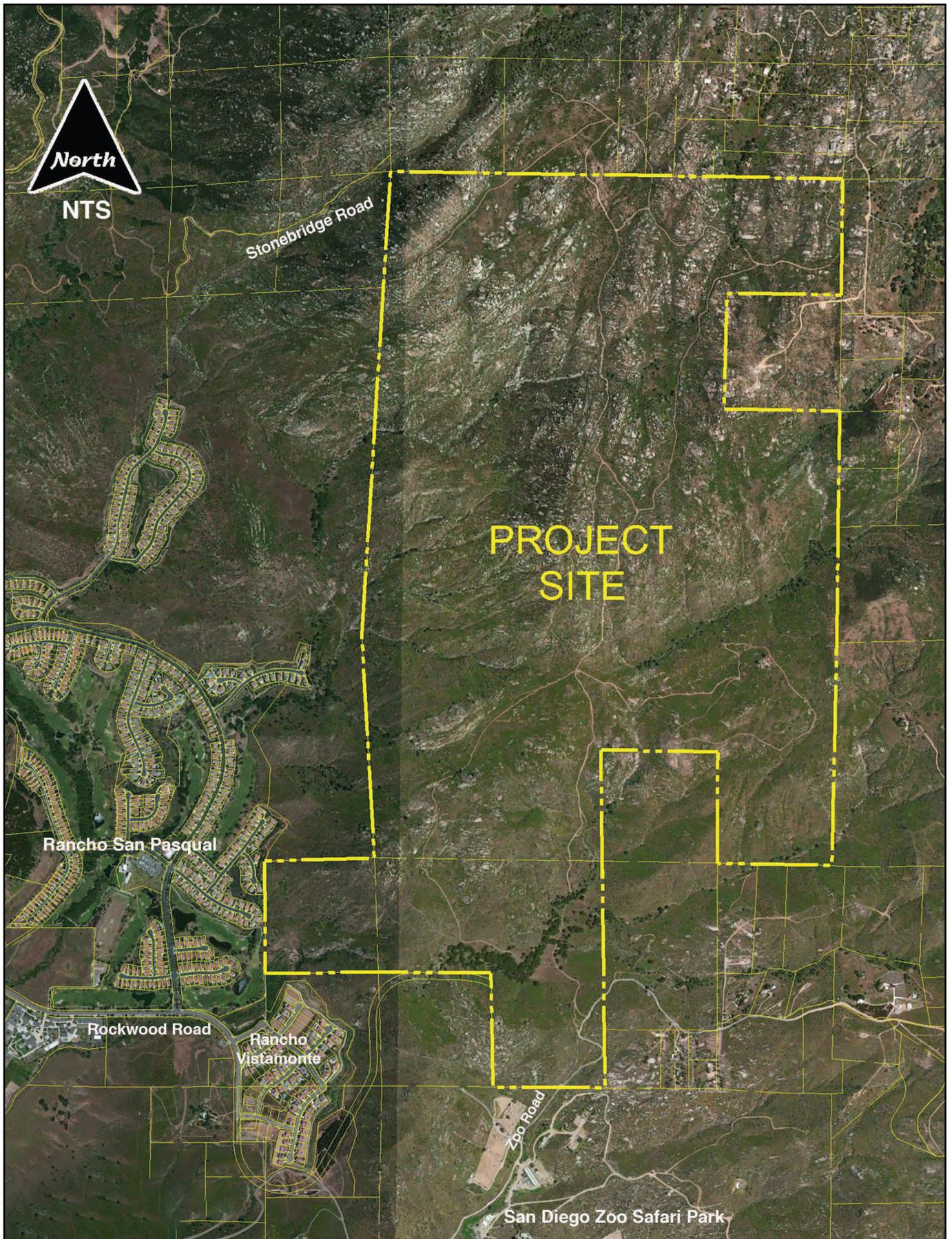
Certification of the EIR and Project Consideration

The Planning Commission and City Council will independently review and consider the FEIR. If the City finds that the FEIR is “adequate and complete,” the City Council may certify the FEIR. Upon certification of the FEIR, the City may act on the proposed project. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and, if applicable, Section 15093. The City would also adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), as described below.

Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

CEQA requires lead agencies to adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment (California Public Resources Code Section 21081.6[a]). The specific “reporting or monitoring” program required by CEQA is not required to be included in the EIR; however, it will be presented to the City Council for adoption and incorporation into any action on the proposed project.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

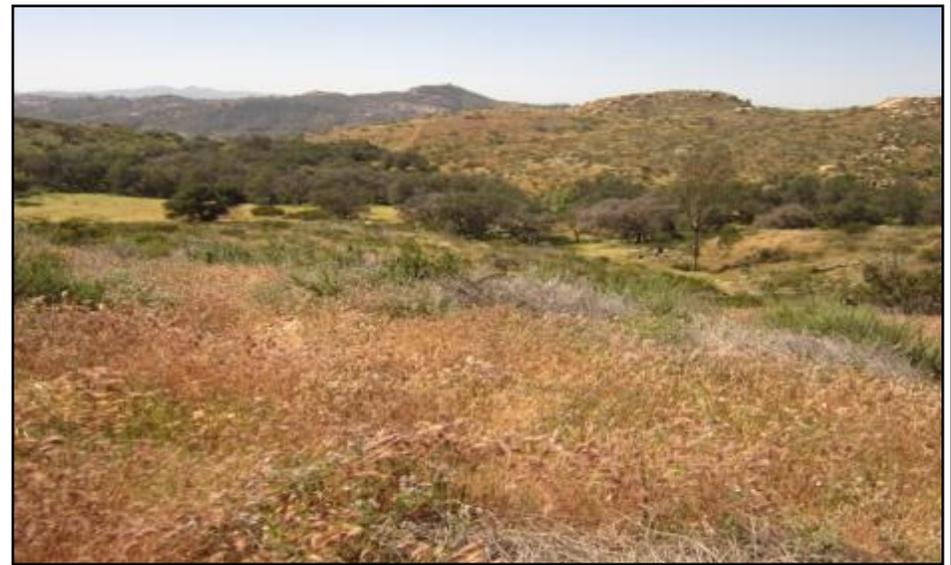


Photo 4

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK