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3 **18.1 Overview**

4 This chapter presents an overview of recreational activities in the vicinity of the Proposed
5 Project site and summarizes the overall federal, State, and local regulatory framework related
6 to recreation. It includes an analysis of the potential impacts of the Proposed Project on
7 recreational resources.

8 **18.2 Regulatory Setting**

9 **18.2.1 Federal Laws, Regulations, and Policies**

10 **Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan**

11 The Proposed Project would be located on private property within the administrative
12 boundary of the Cleveland National Forest (CNF) (refer to Chapter 13, *Land Use and Planning*,
13 for a more detailed description). The Proposed Project would be located in the Sweetwater
14 Place area within the CNF.

15 Sweetwater Place is the primary entry to the CNF area, containing the Interstate 8 road
16 corridor, and the communities of Alpine, Descanso, Pine Valley, Guatay, Japatul Valley,
17 Carveacre, and the Viejas Indian Reservation. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management of
18 Sweetwater Place seeks to ensure that activities originating from neighboring private land
19 are consistent with national forest land management objectives. Efforts to develop recreation
20 focus on establishing a trail network for day-use, as well as links to long-distance trail
21 networks (USFS 2005b). Applicable goals and design criteria identified in the CNF Land
22 Management Plan include:

- 23 ▪ **Goal 3.1** – Provide for Public Use and Natural Resource Protection (USFS 2005a).
- 24 ▪ **S35** – Manage dispersed recreation activities to ensure that environmental
25 sustainability is maintained.
- 26 ▪ **S50** – Mitigate negative long-term impacts from recreation use to soil, watershed,
27 riparian or heritage resources (USFS 2005c).

28 **18.2.2 State Laws, Regulations, and Policies**

29 No state regulations are applicable to recreation in relation to the Proposed Project.

1 **18.2.3 Local Laws, Regulations, and Policies**

2 Because the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is a State agency, it generally is not
3 subject to local laws, regulations, and policies. Local laws, regulations, and policies are
4 considered here for the evaluation of potential recreational impacts that could result from
5 the Proposed Project to the extent that they may inform the analysis and allow for full
6 disclosure of potential impacts.

7 ***San Diego County General Plan***

8 The Conservation and Open Space Element of the San Diego County General Plan (County of
9 San Diego 2011a) has a primary focus of providing direction to future growth and
10 development in the County of San Diego with respect to the protection and preservation of
11 open space; the provision of park and recreation resources; and the conservation,
12 management, and utilization of natural and cultural resources. The following policies for the
13 designation and review of new public facilities are included in the County General Plan and
14 are applicable to the Proposed Project.

- 15 ▪ **Goal COS-21:** Park and recreation facilities that enhance the quality of life and meet
16 the diverse active and passive recreational needs of County residents and visitors,
17 protect natural resources, and foster an awareness of local history, with
18 approximately ten acres of local parks and 15 acres of regional parks provided for
19 every 1,000 persons in the unincorporated County.
- 20 ▪ **Policy COS-21.1 – Diversity of Users and Services.** Provide parks and recreation
21 facilities that create opportunities for a broad range of recreational experiences to
22 serve user interests.
- 23 ▪ **Goal COS-23: Recreational Opportunities in Preserves.** Acquisition, monitoring,
24 and management of valuable natural and cultural resources where public
25 recreational opportunities are compatible with the preservation of those resources.
- 26 ▪ **Policy COS-23.2 – Public Access.** Provide public access to natural and cultural
27 (where allowed) resources through effective planning that conserves the County's
28 native wildlife, enhances and restores a continuous network of connected natural
29 habitat and protects water resources.

30 ***Alpine Community Plan***

31 The Alpine Community Plan (County of San Diego 2011b) is a subcomponent of the County
32 General Plan that implements the goals and policies of the County General Plan for the Alpine
33 area. Alpine is a rural community, and the intent of the Community Plan is to maintain the
34 rural atmosphere of the Planning Area.

35 Goals of the Recreation Element of the Alpine Community Plan include:

- 36 ▪ **Goal 1** – Support the establishment of a balanced system of both natural and
37 improved parks with recreational facilities and services which will incorporate
38 outstanding natural features for recreational opportunities, enrich the lives of Alpine
39 residents, and meet the needs of the community.

- 1 ▪ **Goal 2** – To encourage recreational uses which are compatible and do not interfere
2 with the safety and tranquility of private residences

3 **18.3 Environmental Setting**

4 Recreation activities supported by Sweetwater Place include hiking, equestrian use,
5 mountain biking, and hang-gliding. Trail-based activities are popular. Segments of the
6 California Riding and Hiking Trail pass through Sweetwater Place, but there is no continuous
7 system of trails (USFS 2005b). The CNF recreation area located closest to the Proposed
8 Project site is the Pine Creek Wilderness, approximately 2.2 miles southeast of the Proposed
9 Project (Wilderness.net 2016). The Pine Creek Wilderness is a 13,480-acre area managed by
10 USFS. There are several trails within this Wilderness area. Recreation visitor days are
11 estimated at 7,272 days annually (USFS 2005b). The Pine Creek was designated as a
12 Wilderness in 1984 (USFS 2005c).

13 The California Riding and Hiking Trail, a multi-use trail identified in the County Regional Trail
14 Plan (County of San Diego 2008), runs north to south along the western border of Palo Verde
15 Lake, and is located approximately 3.3 miles west of the Proposed Project. Recreationists
16 have described accessing the top of Bell Bluff, a peak approximately 1.2 miles west to
17 southwest of the Proposed Project, by exiting the California Riding Hiking Trail at Spanish Bit
18 Road. There is no formal trail to the peak, and reaching it requires access to private property
19 (Geocaching 2016). No data was identified regarding the level of use this peak receives.

20 The County Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains approximately 100
21 parks and other recreational facilities, including camping parks, open space preserves, sports
22 parks, community centers, and day use parks (County of San Diego 2016). The County
23 recreation facility closest to the Proposed Project site is the Alpine Community Center, a 7-
24 acre public local park, approximately 7 miles northwest of the Project site (County of San
25 Diego 2011b). Alpine Community Plan identifies two future park facilities, both
26 approximately 7 miles west of the Project site, at the Joan MacQueen Middle School, and at
27 another school/park site at Tavern Road (County of San Diego 2011b).

28 **18.4 Impact Analysis**

29 **18.4.1 Methodology**

30 This impact analysis describes the impacts on recreation associated with implementation of
31 the Proposed Project. Impacts of the Proposed Project were evaluated qualitatively, based on
32 the potential for the Project to disrupt existing recreational facilities, access, and uses.
33 Generally, construction activities may result in a short-term loss of recreational opportunities
34 by disrupting use of or access to recreation areas or facilities. A long-term effect could occur
35 if a recreational opportunity is eliminated as a result of implementation and/or operation of
36 the Proposed Project.

37 **18.4.2 Criteria for Determining Significance**

38 Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and professional expertise, it was
39 determined that the Proposed Project would result in a significant impact on recreation if it
40 would:

- 1 A. Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational
2 facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be
3 accelerated, or
- 4 B. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational
5 facilities that might have an adverse physical impact on the environment.

6 **18.4.3 Environmental Impacts**

7 **Impact REC-1: Increased Use of Parks/Other Recreational Facilities (Less** 8 **than Significant)**

9 As described in Chapter 16, *Population and Housing*, the Proposed Project would have a less-
10 than-significant impact on long-term and short-term population growth. During project
11 operation, the crews conducting inspections and maintenance may choose to visit nearby
12 recreation areas in the region. However, the inspection and maintenance activities would
13 involve monthly and less frequent site visits by a crew of several workers. Any park or
14 recreation facility use by these groups would have a less-than-significant impact to the
15 facilities.

16 During construction, workers may similarly visit nearby recreation areas; however, the use
17 of parks and other recreation facilities by this temporary population (peak employment is
18 anticipated to be approximately 64 workers) would be too low to have a substantial impact.
19 The impacts would be less than significant.

20 **Impact REC-2: Include, or Require Construction or Expansion of,** 21 **Recreational Facilities (No Impact)**

22 The Proposed Project does not include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities.
23 As noted in Impact REC-1, the use of parks and other recreation facilities resulting from the
24 project would be too low to have a substantial impact on existing recreational facilities.
25 Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any requirements to construct or expand
26 recreational facilities. There would be no impact.