

4.0 Environmental Analysis

4.1 Introduction to Environmental Analysis

This section presents an analysis of the environmental impacts associated with the Aera East Cat Canyon Oil Field Redevelopment Plan Project (“proposed Project”). As described in Section 2.0 of this EIR, the proposed Project would re-establish oil production within the Applicant’s property and lease holdings in a historic oil field.¹ Development of the East Cat Canyon Oil Field, as proposed, is analyzed by issue area in this section.

Upon issuance of the Notice of Preparation for the Project’s EIR, a public scoping meeting was conducted and public comments were gathered. The 2016 Scoping Report, which summarizes comments from this meeting is included as Appendix A. This EIR analyzes nine issue or/resource areas where potentially significant impacts could occur. For each of these nine issue areas, the impact evaluations are presented in the following format:

- Environmental Setting
- Regulatory Setting
- Environmental Thresholds (Significance Criteria)
- Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures
- Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures of the Project Alternatives
- Cumulative Effects
- Mitigation Monitoring Program

Within each issue area, the environmental setting describes the existing or baseline conditions within the study area. The proposed Project is analyzed against these existing conditions and the changes represent the environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project. In most cases, the study area is the region in the vicinity of the proposed Project. Exceptions include, but are not limited to, regional air quality data and transportation networks. The study area or environmental setting also includes a comprehensive list of regulations that apply to each issue area within the context of the study area (Regulatory Setting).

Santa Barbara County has developed their own Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual which is used to assist in the County’s determination of whether a project may have a significant impact on the environmental. These thresholds are presented in each issue area. These criteria define the threshold or limit against which a potential environmental impact is considered. The term “significance” is used throughout the EIR to characterize the magnitude of the projected impact. For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact is a substantial or potentially substantial change to resources in the local project area or the area adjacent to the project in comparison to the thresholds of significance established for the resource or issue area. Within each issue area an analysis of potential impacts compared to the appropriate significance criteria is presented.

¹ Oil production at the proposed Project site occurred from 1917 until 1989, when the oil field was shut down due to economics at that time. Most of the field’s abandoned 194 wells, as shown on Figure 2-5 (DOGGR Well Map), were abandoned per DOGGR regulations and nearly all facilities were removed by 2003 (see Section 2.4). Remnant well pads and roadways are present on site that would be improved as part of the proposed Project. The physical conditions of the inactive, historic East Cat Canyon Oil Field at the time the Notice of Preparation for the proposed Project was released (October 21, 2016) is considered the baseline for the impact analysis in this EIR.

Each section also includes detailed mitigation measures that have been developed specifically for the proposed Project to reduce the severity of the identified impacts. Mitigation measures have also been developed for Project alternatives. Based on the application of available mitigation measure(s) to an identified impact, the residual impact is then described. All impacts identified in this EIR have been classified according to the following criteria (County of Santa Barbara, 2010):

- ***Class I – Significant unavoidable adverse impacts for which the decisionmaker must adopt a statement of Overriding Consideration:*** These are significant adverse impacts that cannot be effectively avoided or mitigated. No measures could be feasibly taken to avoid or reduce these adverse effects to insignificant or negligible levels. Even after application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would be significant.
- ***Class II – Significant environmental impacts that can be feasibly mitigated or avoided for which the decisionmaker must adopt Findings and recommended mitigation measures:*** These impacts are potentially similar in significance to those of Class I, but can be reduced or avoided by the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. After application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would not be significant.
- ***Class III – Adverse impacts found not to be significant for which the decisionmaker does not have to adopt Findings under CEQA:*** These impacts do not meet or exceed the identified thresholds for significance. Generally no mitigation measures are required for such impacts.
- ***Class IV – Impacts beneficial to the environment.***

Mitigation measures developed for each issue area are collectively presented in Section 7.0 of the EIR, Mitigation Monitoring Program. This tabular presentation of each mitigation measure includes the mitigation measure number, monitoring/reporting action, method and timing of verification, agency or County responsibilities, and applicant responsibilities. References are collectively presented in Section 8.0.