

3.2.10 Visual Qualities

3.2.10.1 No Action Alternative

Impacts

The site would be maintained in its current state under the No Action Alternative. Since there would be no Project activities, no significant impacts would occur such as altering the ridgeline and filling ravines on the Project site. Existing views of the unvegetated quarry and stockpiles would remain. Because there is no provision to reclaim the site, the visual impact as a result of leaving it unreclaimed would be considered significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is associated with this alternative. The unreclaimed quarry and stockpiles would remain with no means for reclamation and the impact would remain significant.

3.2.10.2 Reduced North Fines Storage Area Alternative Analysis

Impacts

Even though designed to reduce overall impacts on the north slope in the NFSA and the ridgeline, the landform would still be altered significantly by this proposed Reduced NFSA Alternative. The total vegetation disturbed by this alternative would be approximately 155 acres. Under this alternative, the NFSA would receive 50 percent of the quantity of fines as compared to the Proposed Action and would disturb 36 acres in the NSFA and a total 169 acres for the entire Project. This alternative would use the NFSA from approximately year 15 through the end of the mining (year 20). Fines placement on the north slope would still be phased from the bottom of ravines up toward the ridgeline. However, because less fines would be placed in the area under this approach, the upper portion of the ravines would not be used and would remain in their natural state, with the exception of a road cut from the south slope. Final reclamation of the NFSA would be achieved in a shorter timeframe because less acreage would be disturbed. A visual simulation of the RNFSA after reclamation is shown on Figure 3.2-4. Under this Alternative, mining would bring the peak ridgeline elevation down by 80 to 150 feet, retaining between 50 to 80 feet more of the peak ridgeline elevation as compared to the Proposed Action.

While the visual impacts would remain significant, there would be a reduction in the overall visual impact on the north slope in terms of the length of time that the visual impact of the NFSA would occur prior to reclamation and the lesser extent of surficial impact along the ridgeline.

Under this Reduced NFSA Alternative, the mining cut along the western end of the site would begin to be visible within the first few years of mining with reclamation expected by about the 15th year. The viewshed looking eastward at the western end of the site would be expected to remain the same as the Proposed Action including the mining cut and reclamation. As with the Proposed Action Concept Plan intervening terrain will block views of the deeper excavation in

the Cut 3 area. Along Soledad Canyon Road, the overall disturbance to landform under this Reduced NFSA Alternative would remain similar to the Proposed Action, with slight modifications due to the different mining cuts of this alternative.

The potential for lighting impacts remain as described for the Proposed Action.

Mitigation Measures

The mitigation measures would be the same as presented for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1, VQ2 and VQ3). With incorporation of the measures, impacts to the landform remain significant. With incorporation of lighting mitigation (measure VQ4), the residual impact is considered to be less than significant. The overall impacts to visual resources remain significant.

3.2.10.3 Batch Plant Location Alternative Analysis

Impacts

Locating a batch plant within the river corridor will not create additional significant visual quality impacts. The area near Lang Station already contains existing mining and batch plant operations. The addition of another batch plant would be consistent with the visual character of the existing area. Although the batch plant would alleviate some of the visual impacts for the southeast side of the Project site, significant impacts would remain due to the extent of Project operations. All other impacts remain as described for the Proposed Action.

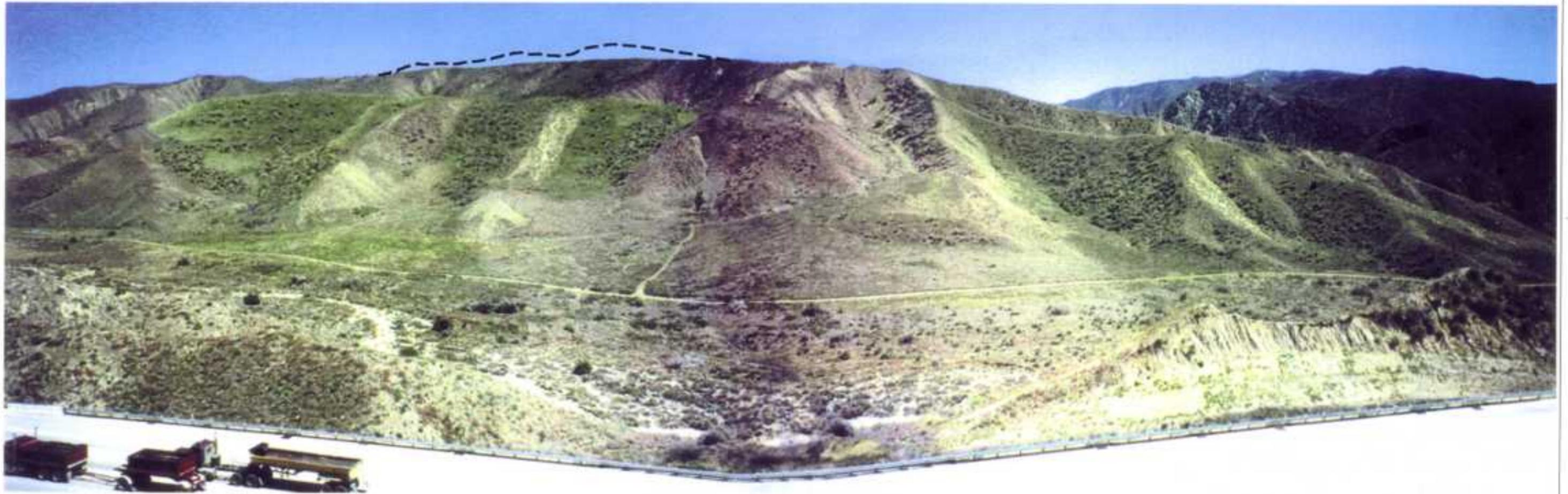
Mitigation Measures

Mitigation would remain the same as that described for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1 through VQ4). No additional mitigation would be associated with placing a batch plant near Lang Station. The overall residual impacts of this alternative remain significant.

3.2.10.4 Addition of Water/Reclaimed Water Alternative Analysis

Impacts

Under this alternative, water would either be brought into the site by pipeline or by truck. Construction of a pipeline to the site would result in temporary adverse to temporary significant visual impacts from the scarring left by construction. No visual impacts would be associated with the trucking of water to the site. The other impacts associated with mining and lighting as described in the Proposed Action also apply to this alternative.



LEGEND:

Original Ridge Line - - - - -

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation for the pipeline would entail that vegetation be allowed to regrow naturally or be supplemented by a revegetation or reclamation program. Once vegetation would be reestablished, no residual impacts would remain for the pipeline. Mitigation as described for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1 through VQ4) would also be required for this alternative. Impacts overall for this alternative would remain significant.

3.2.10.5 Product Transportation Alternative Analysis

Impacts

This alternative would entail construction of a rail spur parallel to the existing line and just to the north to accommodate the mining operation. A conveyor system would be constructed to go under Soledad Canyon Road to the loading facility near the rail spur. Construction of a spur and loading facility would result in additional significant visual impacts. The conveyor system crossing under Soledad Canyon Road and the loading facility would be permanent elements in the viewshed looking toward the river for the life of the Project. Lighting would also remain as described for the Proposed Action.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation would include those measures as described for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1 through VQ4). No additional mitigation would be available for the loading facility and conveyor system. Even with incorporation of mitigation, the impacts would remain significant.

3.2.10.6 Alternative North Fines Storage Area Analysis

Impacts

The surface area that would be disturbed for the alternative NFSA would be 81.8 acres. Because of the configuration of the ravines involved, the area is not only larger than the Proposed Action but would also be spread out over a wider area adjacent to the Antelope Valley Freeway (See Figures 3.2-1 and 3.2-2). It is important to note that the oblique photo used in these figures shows the TMC Project NFSA in the middleground of this view and the alternate NFSA further in the distance. The effect of this is that the fines areas further away are actually larger in relation to the TMC Project NFSA than is depicted in the photos.

Visually, the alternative NFSA would be moved further north and closer to the Antelope Valley Freeway. Because the Reclamation Plan would work upslope, the larger area involved in the alternative would spread out the visual impact and, combined with its location closer to the Freeway, would be more dominant in a vehicle's field of vision as compared to the Proposed Action. This would be especially predominant at Area A, which would be immediately adjacent to the Freeway and would be extremely obtrusive. Area A may result in a distraction to drivers through this area, because heavy equipment would be operating as close as 400 feet or the

equivalent of about one city block from the freeway. There would also be visual impact from the more than twice-as-long access road that would be required along the north face of the site.

In addition, the impacts of mining as described for the Proposed Action would remain under this alternative. The impacts for this alternative are considered significant. Lighting would also be as described for the Proposed Action.

Mitigation Measures

The same mitigation as described for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1 through VQ4) would be required for this alternative. Even with incorporation of the mitigation, the impacts would remain significant.

3.2.10.7 Reduced Quantity Mining Concept Alternative Analysis

Impacts

This alternative would result in a reduced amount of landform alteration needed to accomplish the mining. By avoiding completion of proposed Cut 3 to the west and eliminating Cut 4, lowering of the northeast-southwest ridgeline would be avoided. Though cutting the ridgeline is avoided, the NFSA would still be implemented. Changes in landform would still be visible from areas to the west and south of the Project, however the extent of visible impact from Cut 3 would be reduced. The visual impact would be significant. Project lighting would also be similar to that described for the Proposed Action.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation would require the same measures for NFSA reclamation and lighting as described for the Proposed Action (measures VQ1 through VQ4). Even with incorporation of these measures, the impacts would remain significant.