3.11 Scenery

3.11.1 Introduction

A scenery report was completed for the Project (Lilburn Corporation 2013; Appendix K). The scenery report inventories and analyzes scenery as a manageable resource using the Forest Service Scenery Management System (SMS). The scenery report discloses the existing conditions, desired conditions, and any direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects to scenery that would result from the Proposed Action and other Project alternatives. The report examines the extent to which the Proposed Action and Project alternatives maintain the landscape free from visible disturbances that detract from the valued landscape character in response to the prescribed Scenic Integrity Objective (SIO) established by the SBNF LMP.

3.11.2 Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Standards

3.11.2.1 Federal

San Bernardino National Forest

The LMP, Part 2 (2005) outlines the desired landscape character for the project area as follows:

> *Desert Rim Place – is maintained as a modified to natural appearing landscape that functions as a sanctuary for a large number of federally listed native plants and a highly valued area for limestone production.*

The LMP defines Aesthetic Management Standards as follows:

S9: Design management activities to meet the Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) shown on the Scenic Integrity Objectives Map.

S10: Scenic Integrity Objectives would be met with the following exceptions: Minor adjustments, not to exceed a drop of one SIO level, are allowable with the Forest Supervisor's approval. Temporary drops of more than one SIO level may be made during and immediately following project implementation providing they do not exceed three years in duration.

Within the Project area, the Land Management Plan has designated the SIO as High, with a few small areas of Moderate, corresponding to private lands and existing mining areas.

3.11.2.2 State

California Department of Transportation

The California's Scenic Highway Program's purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 through 263. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated.

Scenic highway nominations are evaluated using the following criteria:

- The State or county highway consists of a scenic corridor that is comprised of a memorable landscape that showcases the natural scenic beauty or agriculture of California.
- Existing visual intrusions do not significantly impact the scenic corridor.
- Demonstration of strong local support for the proposed scenic highway designation.
- The length of the proposed scenic highway is not less than a mile and is not segmented.

The closest highway to the Project area is State Highway 18 (SH-18), which has not been designated as a State Scenic Highway (Caltrans 2013).

3.11.2.3 Local

County of San Bernardino General Plan

The County of San Bernardino contains many scenic resources that are managed and protected by various goals and policies included in the County's General Plan.

The Conservation Element of the County's General Plan provides direction regarding the conservation, development, and utilization of the County's natural resources. Natural resources include, but are not limited to, water, energy, land, biodiversity, minerals, natural materials, recyclables, viewsheds, and air (County of San Bernardino 2007). Goals and policies of the Conservation Element concerning scenery resources include:

Goal M/CO 1 – Preserve the unique environmental features of the Mountain Region including native wildlife, vegetation and scenic vistas.

The Open Space Element provides a reference to guide the protection and preservation of open space, recreation, and scenic vistas while accommodating future growth in the County (County of San Bernardino 2007). Goals and policies of the Open Space Element concerning scenery resources include:

Goal OS 5 – The County will maintain and enhance the visual character of scenic routes in the County.

Goal OS 6 – Improve and preserve open space corridors throughout the County.

SH-18 is designated as a scenic route by the County from San Bernardino northeast to the City of Big Bear Lake; from Big Bear Lake northwest to Apple Valley; within the Victorville sphere of influence; and from Victorville and Adelanto to the Los Angeles County boundary (County of San Bernardino 2007).

3.11.3 Affected Environment

3.11.3.1 Landscape Character and Sense of Place

Landscape character refers to the overall visual and cultural impression of the landscape's attributes. It is the physical appearance, and the cultural context, of a landscape which gives it a unique identity and 'sense of place.' The landscape character is derived from the naturally established landscape, and includes the entire scene being viewed in the landscape setting. The landscape character includes the *Scenic Character Description* and its *Ecosystem Context*, both

of which are taken from site observation and from the LMP, Part 2: San Bernardino National Forest Strategy (SBNF 2005).

Scenic Character Description

The Proposed Action would be located within the Forest Service Desert Rim Place. The Desert Rim Place is remote and rugged, formed by complex geologic faulting. This is the location where the north slope of the San Bernardino Mountains links up to the Mojave Desert. The Desert Rim Place is a convergence of a high desert landscape feature, forming a dramatic backdrop along the southern boundary of the community of Lucerne Valley. Valued scenic attributes include the striking elevation drop from rugged ridgelines to the developed community along the valley floor. Slopes are steep, with shaded canyons and forested ridges of Jeffrey pine, white fir, and incense cedar. As the landscape drops in elevation northward, toward the desert, vegetation cover changes to pinyon-juniper woodlands and intermix with Joshua tree woodlands and desert scrub. Although the landscape is arid, it contains many intermittent streams and important spring locations.

Ecosystem Context

The Ecosystem Context provides a summary of the ecological condition of the valued scenic character's attributes and stressors. Additionally, it describes constituent information about the valued scenery attributes, including preferences and thresholds regarding their management, sustainability, and scenic integrity. It also describes important information about other aesthetic values or recreational, spiritual, social, economic, or community values and attachments.

Vegetation patterns in the Desert Rim Place are generally more dense in canyons and seeps and more sparse and scrubby toward the ridgeline and on calcium carbonate soils, such as within the Project area. The naturally-occurring calcium carbonate soils found in the area are a very bright white color that contrasts strongly with the darker vegetation. The carbonate deposits provide valuable habitat supporting four species of threatened and endangered plants endemic to this area. In 2003, a collaborate effort led to the development of the CMHS, a large area of critical habitat designated for the recovery of carbonate endemic plants. The strategy is designed to provide long-term protection for the carbonate endemic plants and also provide for continued mining.

The Desert Rim Place has a history of mining. In the 1800s, small amounts of gold, silver, and lead were extracted here. Today, the majority of land is valued for the presence of large quantities of high quality limestone mineral deposits used in the production of pharmaceuticals and cement. The majority of the land is under mining claim for limestone and metals. Three large-scale industrial limestone mines are present, including the MCC Cushenbury Cement Plant, annually producing about three million tons of cement-grade limestone and 1.5 million tons of high-brightness limestone.

A portion of the Bighorn Mountain Wilderness, managed jointly by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is located in the southeast area of the Desert Rim Place. The Bighorn Mountain Wilderness includes the Rattlesnake Grazing Allotment, consisting of 1,386 acres on National Forest System land. The eastern portion of the Desert Rim Place is managed as Wild Burro Territory. Also located in this Place are portions of the North Baldwin Lake and Holcomb Valley Special Interest Area, established for its unique botanical, zoological, and historical features, and the Arrastre Creek Special Interest Area established for its botanical

and zoological features. The Desert Rim Place is home to the southwestern willow flycatcher, the desert tortoise, the California spotted owl, and the Cushenbury herd of Nelson's bighorn sheep.

Ninety miles of road provide utility and transportation access throughout the Desert Rim Place, with SH-18 as the main thoroughfare between the mountains and the desert community of Lucerne Valley. Most of the private parcels within the area are utilized patented mining claims.

Scenery and recreation are closely linked resources. Recreation use is mentioned here as a reference to the landscape's non-scenery specific aesthetic attributes, including cultural and social attachments. Although no developed recreation sites are located within the Desert Rim Place, both primitive and semi-primitive types of recreation experiences can be found here. The Bighorn Mountain Wilderness offers primitive hiking, backpacking, horseback riding and hunting opportunities. Other popular activities include driving for pleasure, wildlife viewing, and off-highway vehicle use along designated routes. The Project's potential effects to recreation are analyzed in Section 3.10.

Relative to the large scale of the mountain ridgeline, the Project area comprises a small mass located east and south (upslope) of the other existing mining operations. Distant views (middleground and background) of the mountain backdrop tend to soften landscape details due to the natural prevalence of atmospheric haze from dust and moisture.

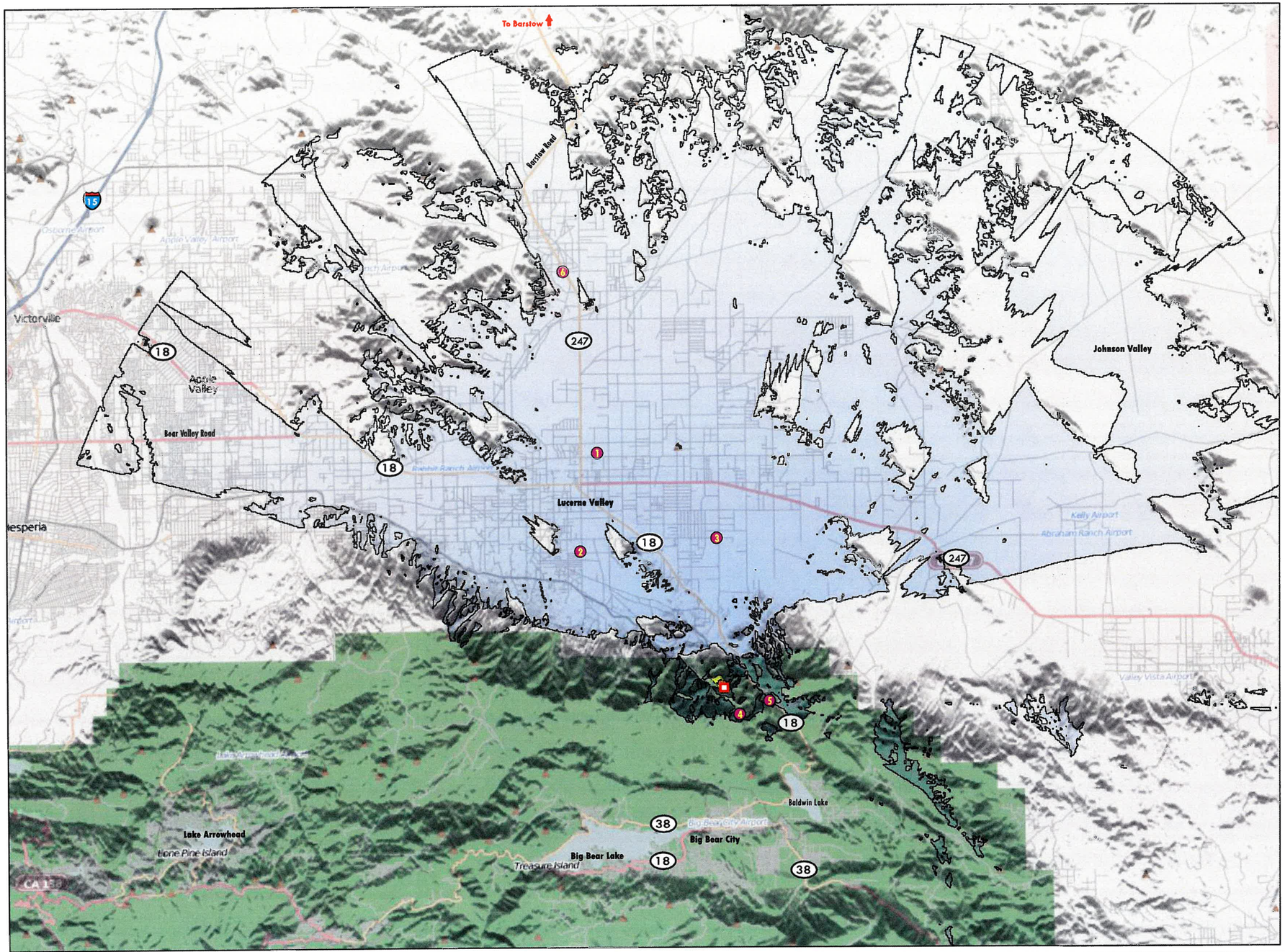
3.11.3.2 Public's Visual Expectations

Visual expectations directly influence the relative importance and sensitivity of what is seen and perceived in the landscape. The visual importance given to the landscape is influenced by multiple factors, including distance, duration, existing conditions, and the viewer's intention. The importance of the scenic resource is weighed against other land resources and activities using Scenic Classes, described in Section 3.11.3.6.

The Project area is located within the northern boundaries of the SBNF in the Desert Rim Place. Figure 3.11-1 shows the potential viewshed of the Project area from areas within the SBNF based on USGS topographic mapping. The Project area is located in a relatively remote location with a generally low level of public use. It would be visible from a few low volume roads and trails (travelways) but not visible from any use areas, including vista points, trailheads, or campgrounds. For viewers living and traveling throughout Lucerne Valley, the San Bernardino Mountains form a scenic backdrop to the developed industrial, residential and commercial areas in the valley.

3.11.3.3 Scenic Attractiveness

Scenic attractiveness measures the scenic importance of a landscape based on human perceptions of the intrinsic beauty of landform, vegetation pattern, and cultural land use. People value all landscapes, but they regard those having attributes such as variety, vividness, mystery, intactness, coherence, harmony, uniqueness, pattern, and balance as having the greatest potential for scenic attractiveness. The landscape character description is used as the frame of reference



LEGEND

- Proposed South Quarry
- U.S.F.S Lands
- Photograph Viewpoint Locations

Potential Viewshed Analysis out to 25 Miles

- Lesser Potential
- Polygon Is Bounded by a Black Line
- Greater Potential

Note: The View Shed Analysis data is comprised of **ONLY** USGS Digital Elevation Models. The data set did not account for trees, air turbidity, houses and other obstructions above ground elevation.

N

0 3.5 Miles

Map Date: 6/4/2014
Source: Lilburn Corporation

Figure 3.11-1 Potential Viewshed of Proposed Project within SBNF Lands

2012-017 Mitsubishi Cement Corporation South Quarry Project

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for determining scenic attractiveness. A landscape's relative scenic attractiveness is classified according to different levels: Level A = distinctive; Level B = common; and Level C = indistinctive. Level A (distinctive) landscapes have the most positive combinations of attributes.

The Project area, set within the northern ridges of the San Bernardino Mountains, has a limited diversity of features. The landscape is relatively unified in form, color and texture throughout the expanse of the ridgeline in that the landscape has similar vegetation patterns and topography. The topography, although dramatic, is tempered by the lack of naturalness and intactness due in part to historic land use patterns (mining). This area has a scenic attractiveness of Level B and Level C.

3.11.3.4 Visibility

Landscape visibility is determined using three elements: (1) travelways and use areas, (2) concern levels and (3) distance zones.

Travelways are linear concentrations of public-viewing, including roads and trails.

Use areas are locations that receive concentrated public-viewing use. They include vista points, trailheads and other recreation sites. Most landscape viewing occurs from travelways and use areas.

Concern levels are a measure of the degree of public importance placed on landscapes as viewed from travelways and use areas. Concern level is a function of both the number of visitors as well as their intent. Three concern levels are used:

> Level 1: (High) is the most important. Users have a high level of concern for scenery. It is associated with major highways, areas of concentration such as recreational facilities, special designations such as scenic byways or national recreation/historic trails and cultural sites.
>
> Level 2: (Moderate) areas are of lesser importance such as state routes, county roads, secondary trails, scenic overlooks, summer home tracts etc.
>
> Level 3: (Low) refers to low use areas and low volume roads, trails, waterways or recreation facilities.

Distance zones are measured from Key Viewpoints. As distance between the viewer and the landscape increases, the level of visible landscape detail decreases. Distance zones are divided into three general categories: Foreground (300 feet to 0.5 mile), Middleground (0.5 to 4 miles), and Background (4 miles to the horizon).

Visibility levels for the SBNF were established in the 2005 LMP scenery analysis process and verified by field observation in 2010. Travelways and use areas were identified within proximity of the Project area, and their concern levels and distance zones documented. There are two travelways within the SBNF. Forest Road 3N02, south of the Project area, is at a middleground distance and has a Concern Level of 3 due to its low use. SH-18, east of the Project area, has a Concern Level of 1 and is also at a middleground distance.

Views from the travelways and use areas (rural residential and commercial) within the Lucerne Valley to the north and west of the site are also Concern Level 2. Most of the travelways and commercial/ residential areas in Lucerne Valley are located at distances greater than 4 miles

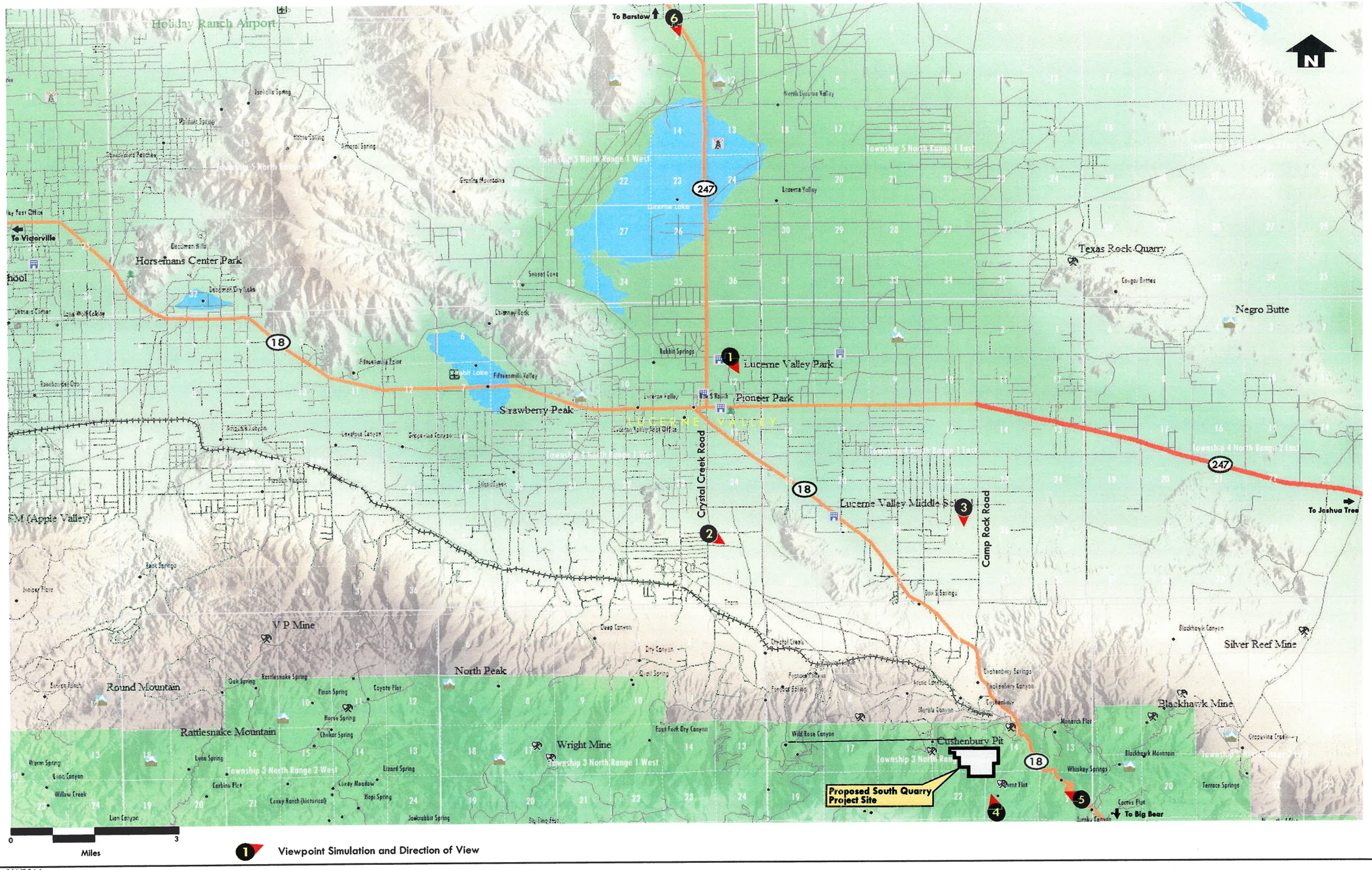
from the Project area, at a background distance zone. Some rural residences are located closer to the mountains at a middleground distance zones (0.5 to 4 miles distance).

3.11.3.5 Viewsheds and Key Viewpoints

Viewsheds are visible portions of the landscape as seen from Key Viewpoints. Six Key Viewpoints were identified, documented and included as part of this inventory (Figure 3.11-2). These viewpoints were selected because they show representative views from the identified travelways and use areas within SBNF lands and from the Lucerne Valley community. Each key viewpoint was evaluated based on levels of screening of the direct view of the Project area. Views can be either screened, partially screened or open, depending on the location and type of vegetation, topography and/or development between the viewpoints and the Project area. A screened viewshed would have all views of the Project area blocked. Partial screening occurs where there are dispersed patterns of vegetation and/or development. Open viewshed conditions lack any screening between the viewpoint and the Project area. Table 3.11-1 provides a summary of the six Key Viewpoints evaluated for potential scenic resource.

Table 3.11-1
Key Viewpoint Locations

Key Viewpoints	Travelways and Use Areas	Distance Zone	Visibility	Concern Levels
1	Lucerne Valley High School & rural residential - North of intersection of SR 18 and 247 on Rabbit Springs Rd.	Background (9 miles NE of site)	Open	2 Moderate
2	Crystal Creek Road – Secondary travel way & rural residential	Background (6 miles NE of site)	Open to partially screened	2 Moderate
3	Camp Rock Road Secondary travel way & rural residential	Middleground (4 miles N of site)	Open	2 Moderate
4	Forest Service Road (3N02) – Low use travel way & recreational	Middleground (1 mile S of site)	Open to fully screened with time	3 Low
5	SR 18 within SBNF Lands – Travel way & recreational	Middleground (1 mile SE of site)	Fully screened (Not Visible)	1 High
6	SR 247 - Travel way north side of Lucerne Valley	Background (14 miles NE of site)	Open to partially screened	2 Moderate



Map Date: 6/4/2014
Source: Lilburn Corporation

Figure 3.11-2 Viewpoint Locations

2012-017 Mitsubishi Cement Corporation South Quarry Project

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3.11.3.6 Scenic Classes

Scenic Classes are used to compare the value of scenery to the value of other resources. They are determined and mapped by combining the measure of scenic attractiveness with the distance zones and concern levels of landscape visibility. Scenic Classes 1 and 2 have high public value, Classes 3 through 5 have moderate value, and Classes 6 and 7 have low value. The Project area has Scenic Class levels of 1 and 2 (Lilburn Corporation 2013).

3.11.3.7 Existing Scenic Integrity

Scenic integrity measures the amount of natural or socially valued appearance in a landscape along with the amount of visual disturbance that detracts from that appearance (the valued landscape character) existing at the time of measurement. Visual disturbances can be human-caused, such as road construction, mining activity, recreation facilities, utility corridors, and other special uses. Scenic Integrity also applies to extreme scenery disturbances caused by natural events whenever these events are outside the historic range of variability, such as catastrophic wildfire, wind/ice storms and disease/insect outbreaks. The valued landscape character forms the baseline for establishing design criteria and/or mitigation measures to be included during Project implementation. Scenic integrity is measured in six levels, ranging from Very High to No Integrity. The levels are described in detail in the scenery report (Lilburn Corporation 2013).

Whether viewed from the SBNF lands to the south or from Lucerne Valley in the north, there are no Key Viewpoints with foreground views of the Project area and distant (middle and background) views tend to soften details due to the prevalence of atmospheric haze. Although views from Lucerne Valley show the surrounding area dominated by road cuts and mining activity, views of the Project area itself show a natural appearing landscape. The Project area has not been disturbed and the valued scenery looks as if it is in a natural state. The existing scenic integrity of the Project area is consistent with a level of High to Very High: the valued landscape character appears natural or unaltered. Although minute landscape disturbances may be present, they are not evident to the casual observer.

3.11.3.8 Visual Absorption Capacity

Visual Absorption Capacity (VAC) is the ability of any landscape to accept human disturbance without the loss of landscape character. It provides the basis for predicting future scenic conditions that may result from project proposals. VAC is a relative indicator of the potential difficulty, and thus the potential cost, of maintaining acceptable degrees of scenic integrity. Slope, vegetative screening and vegetation diversity are primary factors incorporated into VAC determinations.

Topography is the primary source of screening in the Project area. The area's relative continuity in form, color and texture tends to reveal landscape disturbances (as opposed to a heavily dissected landform that could break up the visual continuity of disturbances). To the south, within the SBNF, there are stands of tall trees that, along with topography, help screen disturbances, but vegetation patterns are generally scrubby on calcium carbonate soils, and offer little vegetative screening. The calcium carbonate soils are naturally a bright white color. Although exposed surface soil eventually becomes greyed through weathering, any soil disturbance is emphasized due to its strong contrast with the darker vegetation and undisturbed

soil. Viewed from the north (Lucerne Valley), the steep slopes have very little vegetative screening and disturbed soils are highly visible and slow to grey-out by exposure to the elements. These factors give the area a low capacity for visual absorption.

3.11.4 Environmental Consequences

3.11.4.1 Impact Analysis Approach

CEQA Significance Criteria

Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines suggest that lead agencies evaluate the potential significance of scenery impacts of a project by considering whether the project would result in:

- An adverse effect on a scenic resource;
- Substantial damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantial degradation to the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or,
- A new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

NEPA Analysis Approach

SIOs are prescribed in the LMP and represent the minimally acceptable scenic integrity levels to be achieved, or exceeded, whenever possible. The threshold of effects is exceeded when disturbances to the landscape character do not meet the visual intensity and dominance criteria of the SIO.

3.11.4.2 Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Scenic Integrity Objectives

The Project area has an existing scenic integrity level ranging from High to Very High, and a SIO of High. Direct effects of Alternative 1 – Proposed Action would decrease the scenic integrity to Low during the first 10 years of implementation (Phase 1A) for all views other than Viewpoint 5 along SR-18 from which the Project site is screened throughout the life of Alternative 1 – Proposed Action and the farthest key viewpoint (Viewpoint 6) located at a distance of 14 miles. From this key viewpoint, the scenic integrity level would drop to Moderate. Between year 10 and year 40 (Phases 1B and 2), Viewpoint 6 would maintain its level of Moderate and scenic integrity as seen from the SBNF would continue to be Low. All other views from the Lucerne Valley would drop to a level of Very Low.

After year 40 (Phase 3), the scenic integrity of the area viewed from within the SBNF along Road 3N02 would revert to Very High, as the active quarry is screened from view by an intervening ridge. However, views from the Lucerne Valley would remain Very Low during Phase 3 and 4 until reclamation at approximately year 120. The exception again is Viewpoint 6, which would remain at a level of Moderate due to its distance from the Project site.

The scenic integrity from the four (4) viewpoints within Lucerne Valley would incrementally decrease during Phases 1 through 3 and then trend higher as concurrent reclamation begins to take hold. Scenic integrity would decrease from an existing level of High to Very Low during Phase 2 through 4, and then gradually increase to a level of Low. In 120 years, after full reclamation, the scenic integrity of the Project area would be at a level consistent with Low. Impacts would be localized, but long term (over 20 years). This would not be consistent with the area's SIO of High. Overall direct effects of implementing Alternative 1 – Proposed Action would be major and adverse to the site's level of scenic integrity resulting in a potentially significant impact to a scenic vista and the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings.

The forest-wide scenery inventory included in the LMP was developed as a coarse-scale overview, with the understanding that it would be refined and expanded via project-level scenery analysis. Through the work produced on the project-scale, sufficient detail has been added to the scenery inventory to more accurately establish SIOs that reflect and support the LMP's desired conditions for the Project area. The LMP, Part 2 (2005) outlines the desired landscape character for the Project area as follows:

> *Desert Rim Place – is maintained as a modified to natural appearing landscape that functions as a sanctuary for a large number of federally listed native plants and a highly valued area for limestone production...*

The Project area has an SIO of High and an existing scenic integrity level ranging from High to Very High. Forest Plan direction is to maintain the landscape as modified to natural appearing because of the site's long cultural history and the local and regional economic impacts associated with mining, particularly mining for high-quality limestone mineral deposits. Forest Plans are expected to be revised every 10 to 15 years, and it would be expected that the SIOs would be further refined at that time.

According to LMP Aesthetic Management Standards S10, temporary drops of more than one SIO level may be made during and immediately following implementation of a project providing they do not exceed three years in duration. With Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, the SIO level would be reduced by more than one level, from High to Low during the first 10 years of implementation. Therefore, due to this deviation from the LMP Aesthetic Management Standard S10, a project-specific Forest Plan Amendment to the SIO is being considered that would change to SIO for the South Quarry Project Area to Low. The proposed project-specific amendment is shown on Figure 2.3-1 in Section 2.3.2.1. The proposed SIO for the South Quarry Project Area, defined as the claim boundary, within the Desert Rim Place would be Low (see Figure 2.3-1 in Section 2.3.2.1).

Other Direct and Indirect Impacts

There are no state scenic highways in the vicinity of Alternative 1 - Proposed Action; therefore, no effects to scenic resources within a state scenic highway would occur.

There would be minor to neutral indirect effects to the future landscape character as viewed from SBNF lands or from the Lucerne Valley with implementation of the MDAQMD rules and regulations that would minimize the creation of visible dust from the mining operation. Alternative 1 – Proposed Action would not include the installation of lighting additional to what currently exists at the existing cement plant; therefore, light or glare impacts would not occur.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative effects analysis for scenery includes a land area encompassing the north slope of the San Bernardino Mountains as seen from the key viewpoints in Lucerne Valley. This area of cumulative effects analysis is smaller than the area identified in Section 3.1.2 and was bounded in this manner to focus on and correspond with the sense of place and valued landscape character descriptions found in the LMP, and the changes in these values from the key viewpoints in Lucerne Valley. The mountains are a dominant landscape feature, forming a dramatic scenic backdrop along the southern boundary of the community of Lucerne Valley. The existing viewshed, as seen from Lucerne Valley High School, includes the northern slopes and quarry areas that comprise the cumulative effects analysis. There are approximately 16,000 acres of viewshed within the area of cumulative effects analysis. Alternative 1 - Proposed Action would affect approximately 153.6 acres (less than 1 percent) by introducing landscape disturbances caused from active limestone mining, including changes to the form, texture and color of the valued landscape character. Past and present actions affect approximately 1,600 additional acres, bringing the total cumulative visual impacts to 1,754 acres.

Most of the mining operations along the north face of the San Bernardino Mountains are active and are permitted for many decades. Concurrent reclamation in the form of revegetation, covering of exposed areas with darker material, erosion control, and rock staining is required of most mining operations as a specific phase or area is completed. Despite these requirements, existing and permitted mining on the north face of the San Bernardino Mountains has resulted in extensive surface disturbances that are visible from Lucerne Valley. Past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions and the effects to scenery of those actions are listed in Table 3.11-2.

The existing limestone mines are the source of adverse scenery impacts due to their dominant contrast to the valued landscape character in color, form, line, and texture. These impacts are increased by their position on the mountain slopes (centrally located between the valley floor and the ridge line). The large scale and long term disturbances in the landscape caused by existing mines, stockpiles, process plants, and hauls roads dominate the viewshed, in some cases regardless of viewing distance. Based on the cumulative effects analysis, the valued scenery appears heavily altered due to the combination of the landscape's contiguous texture, the sloping topography, and the light color of the limestone soil – all of which highlight disturbances in the landscape. Therefore, the existing scenic integrity is congruent with a level of Very Low, trending away from the SIO of High and towards No Integrity.

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action would have an adverse effect on the valued landscape character by incrementally adding to the cumulative existing scenic impacts. However, the Project area comprises a very small area relative to the large scale of the landscape being viewed. After implementation of Design Features/Mitigation Measures SCEN-1 through SCEN-14, the scenic integrity levels are expected to remain unchanged by cumulative effects, as the additional South Quarry site would comprise less than one percent of the area of analysis, and disturbances caused by Alternative 1 – Proposed Action would be much less dominant than existing landscape disturbances. Direct effects may lower the scenic integrity of the Project site, but cumulatively, this would have a minor to neutral effect on the overall scenic integrity of the area.

Table 3.11-2
Existing and Foreseeable Actions and Effects on Cumulative Scenic Integrity

Project	Location	Description	Status	Cumulative Effects on Scenic Integrity
Specialty Minerals, Inc.	West of Marble Canyon, east of Furnace Creek. Quarries and haul roads on north-facing slopes.	Several limestone quarries, stockpiles, haul roads, and processing plant	Active	Increase
OMYA California, Inc.	Southern terminus of Crystal Creek Rd, approx. 7 miles west of Project. Quarry and haul roads on north-facing slopes.	Two limestone quarries, stockpiles, haul roads, and processing plant	Active	Increase
Cushenbury Sand and Gravel Quarry	1.5 miles north of the Project site, west of the junction of SR18 and Camp Rock Rd at lower elevation on alluvial fan	Sand and gravel mine and processing plant	Active	Unchanged
Crystal Hills Sand and Gravel, Inc.	South of Meridian Rd adjacent to rail line, approx. 5 miles northwest of the Project site at lower elevation on alluvial fan.	Sand and Gravel Mine	Inactive	Unchanged
Hi-Grade Materials	7 miles northwest of the Project, along Meridian Rd at Azurite Rd at lower elevation on alluvial fan.	Sand and gravel mine and processing plant	Active	Unchanged
Mitsubishi Cement Corporation	North and at lower elevation than the Proposed Action. Quarries and access roads on north-facing slopes.	Existing East Pit, developing West Pit, proposed South Quarry, cement plant and haul roads	Active	Increase

Note that Omya's Sentinel Quarry and Butterfield Quarry are within the SBNF and these quarries are not visible from Lucerne Valley. The remaining limestone quarries are on private land or BLM unpatented claims on the north-facing slopes visible from Lucerne Valley. The sand and gravel mines are located on the alluvial fans north of the visible north-facing slopes and are generally much less visible due to their lower elevations.

Mitigation Measures

The NEPA design features from Section 2.3.2.14 for scenery are listed below for convenience. Design features indicated with an asterisk (*) are also CEQA Mitigation Measures that would avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, and/or compensate for effects to biological resources anticipated with Alternative 1- Proposed Action.

SCEN-1: The haul road shall be designed with minimal fill slopes to reduce the contrast of the lighter-colored fill on the natural slopes and boulder roll-down.

SCEN-2*: Approved color-staining product(s) shall be used to darken the access road cuts and visible southern quarry slopes where shown to be successful. Prior to commencement of construction of the access road, MCC shall submit information

to the Forest Service summarizing available staining products and whether they are appropriate for application to the South Quarry road cuts and visible quarry slopes, considering color, effectiveness, and durability. If appropriate products are not available at the commencement of construction, MCC shall update the information no less than once every five years thereafter until an appropriate product is identified. MCC may use an alternative method to reduce visual contrast as approved by the Forest Supervisor.

SCEN-3: Adequate erosion control features shall be designed along the haul road to limit erosion downslope.

SCEN-4: Onsite structures shall be painted a color with low contrast and reflectivity.

SCEN-5: A berm shall be constructed along the south rim of the quarry and planted with native vegetation.

SCEN-6: The footprint of the quarry shall be designed to minimize impacts to any streams and riparian habitat to the extent feasible.

SCEN-7: Surface disturbances shall be limited to those areas identified in the Mine Reclamation Plan. Disturbances outside of these areas shall be prohibited.

SCEN-8: The quarry shall be designed to limit views of the quarry site from the east and southeast.

SCEN-9*: Upper slopes that may be visible from Lucerne Valley shall be cut or roughened to reduce straight lines and visual impacts as benches are completed.

SCEN-10: The quarry shall be designed to limit views of the lower half of the quarry by not removing the north slope through approximately Phase 3, allowing reclamation and revegetation (including tree growth) to occur to reduce contrast (not applicable to Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation).

SCEN-11: A 20- to 25-foot high natural perimeter berm (half of a vertical bench height) shall be left in place on the outside ridge of each excavated bench until the interior area of the next lower excavation level is completed to limit views of active mining and equipment from Lucerne Valley (not applicable to Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation).

SCEN-12: Waste rock shall be deposited into waste rock stockpiles within the quarry footprint to reduce the area of disturbance and visual impact outside the quarry rim and to reduce internal slopes and aid in revegetation.

SCEN-13*: Reclamation and revegetation shall be implemented per the approved Reclamation Plan on completed benches concurrent with mining.

SCEN-14*: MDAQMD dust controls shall be implemented to reduce visible dust plumes.

Residual Impacts after Mitigation

After implementing Design Features/Mitigation Measures that minimize adverse impacts to scenery and restoration efforts the scenic integrity of the Project site would be Low, but cumulatively, the Proposed Action would have a minor to neutral effect on the overall scenic

integrity of the area. This represents a significant, unmitigable Project-level impact but a less-than-significant cumulative impact to scenery and visual resources.

3.11.4.3 Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Similar to Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, with Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation the South Quarry site would be seen from all Key Viewpoints except from Viewpoint 5, from which the proposed South Quarry would not be visible. Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation was developed in response to public comments requesting an alternative with a shorter duration and/or smaller footprint. This alternative would only implement Phases 1A, 1B, and 2. Mining of the north slope, which is proposed in Phases 3 and 4 of Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, would not occur. Mining in the quarry would last 40 years rather than 120 years. As a result, reclamation and revegetation at the South Quarry site would be completed nearly 80 years sooner, and localized indirect effects related to mining, such as fugitive dust, would also end earlier under this alternative.

The Project area has an existing scenic integrity level ranging from High to Very High, and a SIO of High. Direct and indirect effects would be the same as those in Alternative 1 as seen from each key viewpoint from implementation through year 40 (Phases 1A, 1B and 2). As with Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, the scenic integrity would initially decrease to Low during the first 10 years of implementation (Phase 1A) for all views other than Viewpoint 5 along SR-18 and Viewpoint 6. The Project site is screened from Viewpoint 5 throughout the life of Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation and Viewpoint 6 is the farthest key viewpoint, located at a distance of 14 miles. From Viewpoint 6, the scenic integrity level would only drop to Moderate. Between year 10 and year 40 (through Phase 2), Viewpoint 6 would maintain its level of Moderate, and scenic integrity as seen from the SBNF would continue to be Low. All other views from the Lucerne Valley would drop to a level of Very Low.

After the completion of Phase 2 (year 40), the scenic integrity of the area viewed from within the SBNF along Road 3N02 would revert to Very High, as the active quarry would be screened from view by an intervening ridge. Views from the Lucerne Valley would gradually increase to a level of Low as reclamation is completed. The exception is Viewpoint 6, which would remain at a level of Moderate due to its distance from the Project site.

The scenic integrity from the Key Viewpoints would incrementally decrease during Phases 1 and 2, then trend higher as reclamation is completed. Scenic integrity would decrease from an existing level of High to Very Low. Full reclamation would be completed 80 years earlier than Alternative 1- Proposed Action. Impacts would be localized, but long term (over 20 years). This would not be consistent with the area's SIO of High.

Overall direct effects of implementing this alternative would be major and adverse to the site's scenic integrity, but the duration of the disturbances would last a substantially shorter time than in Alternative 1- Proposed Action. Additionally, the overall amount of disturbance would be 20 acres less than with Alternative 1 – Proposed Action. The most severe of the scenic disturbances (mining of the north slope, Phases 3-4), would be avoided, and reclamation would restore the scenic integrity of the Project area to a level of Low 80 years and several generations sooner than in the Proposed Action.

Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation would cause the SIO level to be reduced by more than one level, from High to Low during the first 10 years of implementation and a Forest Plan Amendment to the SIO is also being considered (see Section 2.3.2.1). The proposed amendment would be the same as described for Alternative 1 – Proposed Action and would change the SIO for the Project Area to Low.

There are no state scenic highways in the vicinity of Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation; therefore, no impacts to scenic resources within a state scenic highway would occur.

There would be minor to neutral indirect effects to the future landscape character as viewed from SBNF lands or from the Lucerne Valley with implementation of the MDAQMD rules and regulations that would minimize the creation of visible dust from the mining operation. Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation would not include the installation of additional lighting over what currently exist at the existing cement plant; therefore, light or glare impacts would not occur.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative effects analysis for Alternative 2- Partial Implementation is similar to that for Alternative 1– Proposed Action. The cumulative effects analysis for Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation includes a land area encompassing the north slope of the San Bernardino Mountains as seen from Lucerne Valley. The area of cumulative effects analysis was bounded in this manner to correspond with the 'sense of place' and valued landscape character descriptions found in the LMP. The existing viewshed, as seen from Lucerne Valley High School, includes the northern slopes and quarry areas that comprise the cumulative effects analysis. There are approximately 16,000 acres of viewshed within the area of cumulative effects analysis. Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation would impact approximately 133.6 acres (0.8 percent) by introducing landscape disturbances caused from active limestone mining, including changes to the form, texture and color of the valued landscape character. Past and present actions impact approximately 1,600 additional acres, bringing the total cumulative visual impacts to 1,734 acres. It is difficult to determine future actions, as much of the scenic disturbances occur on private land or land not administered by the SBNF.

Based on the cumulative effects analysis, the valued scenery appears heavily altered due to the combination of the landscape's contiguous texture, the sloping topography, and the light color of the limestone soil – all of which highlight disturbances in the landscape. Therefore, the cumulative existing scenic integrity is congruent with a level of Very Low, trending away from the SIO of High and towards No Integrity.

Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation would have an adverse effect on the valued landscape character by incrementally adding to the cumulative scenic impacts. However, similar to Alternative 1 – Proposed Action, the Project area comprises a very small area relative to the large scale of the landscape being viewed. After implementation of design features/mitigation measures, the scenic integrity levels are expected to remain unchanged by cumulative effects, as the additional South Quarry site would make up only 0.8 percent of the area of analysis, and disturbances caused by partial implementation would be much less dominant than existing landscape disturbances. Direct effects may lower the scenic integrity of the Project site, but cumulatively, this would have a minor to neutral effect on the overall scenic integrity of the area.

Mitigation Measures

The Scenery Design Features/Mitigation Measures from Section 2.3.2.13 listed for Alternative 1 – Proposed Action in Section 3.11.4.2 include CEQA Mitigation Measures that would avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, and/or compensate for effects to scenery resources anticipated with Alternative 2- Partial Implementation, with the exception of SCEN-9, which is not applicable to Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation.

Residual Impacts after Mitigation

After implementing design features/mitigation measures that minimize adverse impacts to scenery and restoration efforts the scenic integrity of the Project site would be Low, but cumulatively, Alternative 2 – Partial Implementation would have a minor to neutral effect on the overall scenic integrity of the area. Impacts would be significant and unmitigable at a Project level, but less-than-significant at a cumulative level.

3.11.4.4 Alternative 3 – No Action/No Project

Direct and Indirect Impacts

If Alternative 3 – No Action/No Project is selected and the proposed South Quarry Project does not take place, there would be no direct or indirect effects to the scenery of the Project area. The existing scenic integrity level would continue to range from High to Very High. No LMP Amendment would be required. With the No Action/ No Project Alternative, mining would continue within the East and West Pits at the rate of approximately 2.6 MTPY. Mining would be conducted at lower elevations to the north of the SBNF boundary on private lands and BLM claims by MCC and others to the west of the project area along the north slope of the San Bernardino Mountains. MCC would continue mining within the existing East Pit for approximately 5 years and would continue developing the West Pit according to its 2004 County-approved mine and reclamation plan (2004M-001). The West Pit would excavate a ridge on the north slope directly west of the existing East Pit outside of SBNF lands. Note that the Cushenbury Mine Expansion EIR determined that scenery impacts from the expansion of the West Pit would be potentially significant (Lilburn Corporation 2013).

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative effects analysis for Alternative 3 – No Action/ No Project includes a land area encompassing the north slope of the San Bernardino Mountains as seen from Lucerne Valley. Existing and permitted mining on the north face of the San Bernardino Mountains has resulted in surface disturbances that are visible from Lucerne Valley. Table 3.11-2 lists the existing mining operations located in the region. Disturbances are evident on the mountain slopes due to the light color of the limestone quarries, stockpiles, and haul roads in contrast to undisturbed slopes and vegetation. The exposed mine features and the contrast between the natural landforms creates disturbances in line, form, color and texture to the landscape character. The limestone mines contribute to the adverse effects on scenery because of their position on the mountain slopes (centrally located between the valley floor and the ridge line) and the color contrasts they create between mined and natural-appearing areas.

Most of the mining operations along the north face of the San Bernardino Mountains are active and permitted for many decades into the future. Concurrent reclamation upon completion of benches or phases of mining in the form of revegetation, covering of exposed areas with darker

material, erosion control, and rock staining is required of most mining operations. Final reclamation would not commence until a specific operation or phase is completed.

There would be no cumulative effects to the future landscape character of the viewshed from SBNF lands nor from Lucerne Valley for Alternative 3 – No Action/ No Project. The existing and approved future mining by MCC and other mine companies along the north slopes would generally be outside or north of SBNF lands below the northern ridgeline and would not be visible from SBNF lands. If Alternative 3 – No Action/ No Project is selected, cumulative effects are expected to increase over time with the approved mining activities, and then gradually decrease with implementation of reclamation; the additional South Quarry areas would not be disturbed and would not add to cumulative impacts.

Mitigation Measures

With the No Action/No Project Alternatives no mitigation measures would be required.

Residual Impacts after Mitigation

If the No Action/ No Project Alternative is selected there would be no direct or indirect effects to the scenery of the Project area, therefore, there would be no residual impacts.