

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a general overview of the environmental setting for the Project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area can be found in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, as well as in the other sections throughout this SEIR that analyze individual environmental topic areas.

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING

The Project Site is located in unincorporated San Benito County, California. San Benito County is located in the Coast Range mountains, south of San Jose and west of the Central Valley. The County is surrounded by Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties to the west, Santa Clara County to the north, and Merced and Fresno Counties to the east and south. The County is served by State Route (SR) 25, which runs north/south through the middle of the County, SR 152 and SR 156, which run east/west through the northern portion of the County, and U.S. Highway 101, which runs north/south through the northwest corner of the County. U.S. Highway 101 provides a major connection between the San Francisco Bay Area and the coastal communities within the Monterey Peninsula. San Benito County occupies nearly 889,000 acres or 1,389 square miles, of which approximately 883,648 acres or 99.4 percent of all the land is unincorporated (U.S. Census Bureau, December 2014). According to the California Department of Finance (DOF), the County of San Benito population was 57,517 on January 1, 2014 (Table E-1, City/County Population Estimates with Annual Percent Change, 2014). The majority of this population (63.7 percent, or 36,370 residents) reside in the City of Hollister, and an additional 1,894 (3.3 percent) live in the City of San Juan Bautista.

The climate of the region varies by season, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months. Summer conditions in San Benito County are typically characterized by warm temperatures and low humidity, with temperatures averaging in the low 80s°F during the day and in the 50s°F at night. During the summer months, the prevailing winds are typically from the south and/or west. Winter conditions are characterized by occasional rainstorms interspersed with stagnant and sometimes foggy weather. The daytime average temperature is in the low 60s°F and nighttime temperatures average in the upper 40s°F. During winter, winds predominate from the south, but north winds frequently occur. Rainfall occurs mainly from late October to early May, with an average of approximately 13 inches per year. This amount can vary significantly from year to year.

3.2 PROJECT SITE SETTING

The Project Site encompasses approximately 1,994 acres located in the northeastern portion of unincorporated San Benito County. The Project Site is located approximately three miles southwest of the City of Hollister, approximately 3.5 miles southeast of the City of San Juan Bautista and approximately 1.0 mile south of SR 156. The Project's street address is 3825 Union Road, Hollister. The majority of the Project Site has been used historically for agricultural purposes (approximately 1,302 acres), primarily for grazing but also for the cultivation of row crops. In addition, a portion (approximately 261 acres) of the Project Site currently consists of the San Juan Oaks Golf Club, which includes an 18-hole golf course, clubhouse, driving range and support structures and facilities (collectively, "Existing Golf Club").



In terms of surrounding land uses, agricultural land in the form of row crops is located directly north and west of the Project Site and areas of open land, some of which are used for grazing, irrigated pasture and dry-farming, are located to the south, east and west. In addition, industrial uses, including an industrial facility used for explosives manufacturing and testing, are located approximately one mile north of the Project Site near the intersection of San Juan Oaks Road and Union Road. SR 156 is located approximately 1.0 mile north of the Project Site and the San Justo Reservoir is located approximately 0.25 mile east of the Project Site's boundary.

3.3 CUMULATIVE PROJECTS SETTING

The State CEQA Guidelines require the analysis of the cumulative effects of a project in combination with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future development in the area. CEQA defines "cumulative impacts" as two or more individual events that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed Project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Section 15130 of the State CEQA Guidelines prescribes two methods for analyzing cumulative impacts: (1) use of a list of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts; or (2) use of a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document. The approach used in each individual environmental topic area is discussed below as well as in more detail in the relevant sections throughout this SEIR.

Due to the long-term and multi-phased characteristics of the proposed Project, for most of the environmental topic areas, this SEIR examines cumulative impacts based on a summary of projections in accordance with the long-range general plan buildout of San Benito County and the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, which are consistent with the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) Monterey Bay Area 2014 Regional Forecast (AMBAG Regional Forecast) through the year 2035. Table 3-1 summarizes these projections. As shown therein, the County (including Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista) had an estimated population of approximately 55,269, a total of approximately 17,870 housing units, and approximately 16,200 employees in 2010. The potential buildout through the year 2035 in unincorporated San Benito County would result in an increase of approximately 26,063 residents, approximately 7,187 housing units, and approximately 3,346 employees. It should be noted that the proposed Project is not considered within the existing San Benito County General Plan, and therefore is not specifically accounted for in the AMBAG projections. Therefore, the cumulative analysis for each environmental topic area considers the proposed Project buildout in addition to cumulative buildout (pursuant to the AMBAG projections).

Cumulative impacts are discussed within each of the specific impact analysis discussions in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.



**Table 3-1
 Approximate Cumulative Development associated with General
 Plan Buildout for Unincorporated San Benito County, and Cities of
 Hollister and San Juan Bautista**

Data		2010 Total	2035 Total	Net New
Population	Unincorporated San Benito County	18,479	33,843	15,364
	City of Hollister	34,928	45,397	10,469
	City of San Juan Bautista	1,862	2,092	230
	Total	55,269	81,332	26,063
Housing Units	Unincorporated San Benito County	6,724	11,576	4,852
	City of Hollister	10,401	12,620	2,219
	City of San Juan Bautista	745	861	116
	Total	17,870	25,057	7,187
Employment	Unincorporated San Benito County	5,292	5,999	707
	City of Hollister	10,497	13,031	2,534
	City of San Juan Bautista	411	516	105
	Total	16,200	19,546	3,346

Source: AMBAG, Monterey Bay Area 2014 Regional Forecast, 2014 .



This page intentionally left blank.

