

4.10 AESTHETICS/VISUAL RESOURCES

The following discussion is based on the visual simulations prepared by RRM Design Group (2014), depicting the permanent Project facilities and infrastructure (Appendix P).

4.10.1 Environmental Setting

4.10.1.1 Regional Character

The Project site is located in East Cat Canyon approximately ten miles south of the City of Santa Maria within the Solomon Hills. The Solomon Hills are located within the Transverse Ranges which separate the Santa Maria Valley to the north from the Los Alamos Valley and Orcutt to the south. The existing visual character of the region is largely defined by expansive, hilly views, active agricultural and grazing operations, oil production facilities and equipment, urban settings (such as the City of Santa Maria and Orcutt) and smaller rural towns (including Sisquoc and Los Alamos).

4.10.1.2 Scenic Highways/Corridors

At present there are two State highways in Santa Barbara County which have been officially designated "State Scenic Highways," (County of Santa Barbara, 2009); State Highway 1 from its intersection with State Highway 101 at Las Cruces north to the southerly city limits of Lompoc; and the entire length of State Highway 154. Portions of other State Highways traversing the County are in the State's masterplan of highways eligible for "Scenic Highway" designation. These include State Highway 33 from the junction of State Highway 166 south into Ventura County, State Highway 166 from the junction of State Highway 33 west through Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties to its junction with State Highway 101, State Highway 101's entire length in Santa Barbara County, and State Highway 150 from its junction with State Highway 101' east into Ventura County. Within the Project corridor, the nearest Scenic Highway (State Highway 101) is located approximately three miles south-west of the Project site. The portion of State Highway 101 which runs from Santa Maria to Los Alamos, nearest the Project site, is also a primary destination route rated as a level three (3) by the County of Santa Barbara. This designation means that the route is considered to be of the least scenic value of a major capacity, primary destination route within the County.

4.10.1.3 Site-Specific Character

The majority of the Project site is located within the existing Cat Canyon oil production area entirely within property currently owned by Aera. Historically, oil operations within the Project site have been conducted since 1888 and intermittent production activities were conducted until 1989, when the production operations were shut down due to economic reasons. Well abandonment (decommissioning) was completed in 2003. In 2012, four test wells were drilled.

Topography at the Project site is generally comprised of steeply to moderately incised canyons and drainages, moderate to steep hills, valleys, and small flat areas. Properties adjacent to the Project site are presently used for oil production, grazing operations and other agricultural production. Due to past and on-going oil field activities and cattle grazing that occurs throughout

the Project site, much of the area has been previously disturbed. However, due to the steep and rugged terrain, many less accessible areas that may be visible from nearby roadways remain dominated by undisturbed native vegetation.

The Project site itself is within an area designated as “moderate” scenic value and is not located within a Scenic Values Study Area, as designated by the Open Space Element of the County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan (May 2009). The Project site is not visible from any major transportation corridors; however, some onsite components of the Project will be visible by the public from certain points along Cat Canyon Road and Long Canyon Road. There are also many existing oil production operations in Cat Canyon that neighbor the Project site which include drilling equipment, processing plants and storage tanks (Figures 4.10-1 and 4.10-2 – Existing Visual Setting).

4.10.2 Regulatory Setting

4.10.2.1 State Regulations- California Environmental Quality Act

The State of California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15126.2, (Consideration and Discussion of Significant Environmental Impacts) states that an Environmental Impact Report discussion should include relevant specifics in the areas of “scenic quality”. In addition, Section 15360, (Environment) defines “Environment” as the physical conditions which exist within the area which will be affected by a proposed project including “objects of historical or aesthetic significance.” No other State requirements or guidelines pertain to the Project site.

4.10.2.2 Local Regulations- County of Santa Barbara

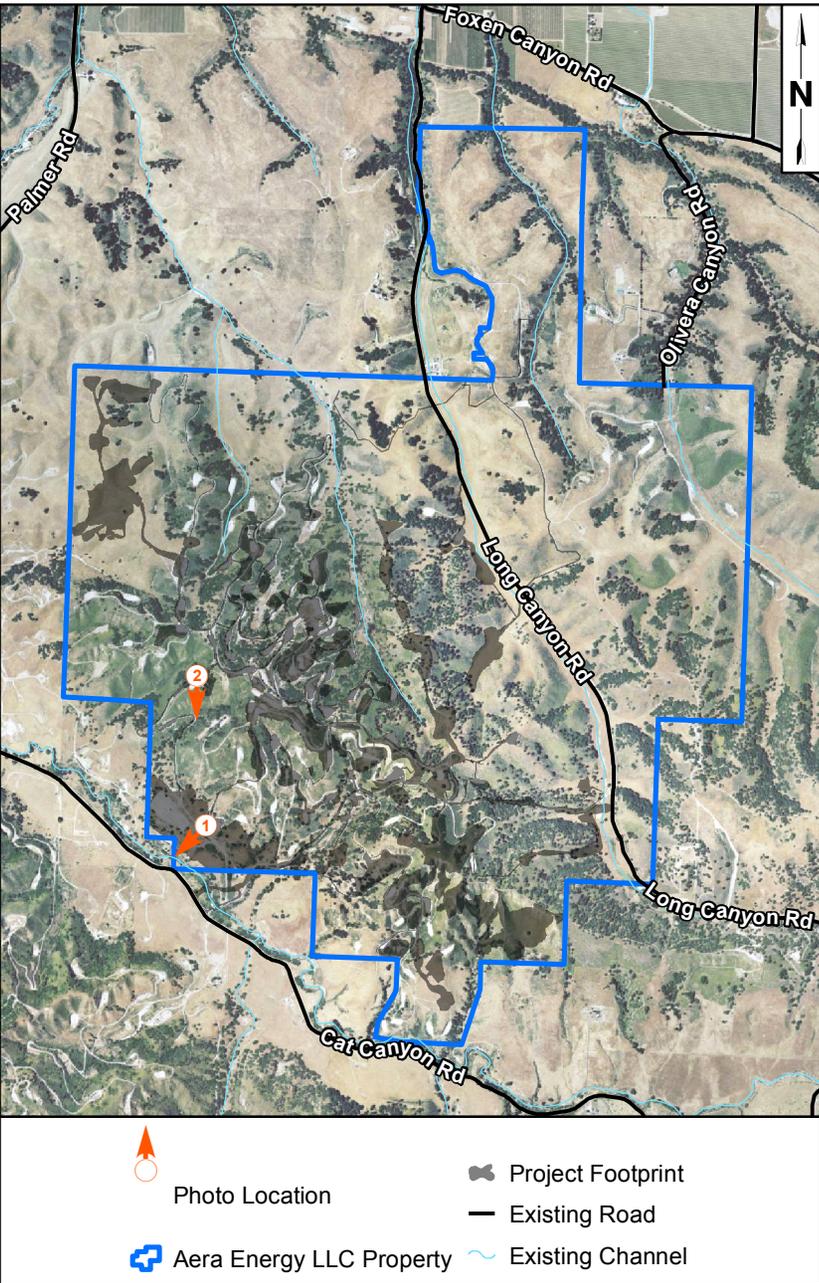
The Project site is located within the jurisdiction of the County of Santa Barbara and the following County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element, visual resource policies (1980, amended 2011) are applicable to the Project:

1. All commercial, industrial, and planned developments shall be required to submit a landscaping plan to the County for approval;
2. In areas designated as rural on the land use plan maps, the height, scale, and design of structures shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment, except where technical requirements dictate otherwise. Structures shall be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms; shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape; and shall be sited so as not to intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing places;
3. In areas designated as urban on the land use plan maps and in designated rural neighborhoods, new structures shall be in conformance with the scale and character of the existing community. Clustered development, varied circulation patterns, and diverse housing types shall be encouraged;
4. Signs shall be of size, location, and appearance so as not to detract from scenic areas or views from public roads and other viewing points; and

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 Source: Santa Barbara County, Central Coast Aerial Mapping 2011, DPSI 2013
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Feet
 Notes: This map was created for informational and display purposes only.

PROJECT NAME:
**EAST CAT CANYON
 OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**
 PROJECT NUMBER: 1002-0455 DATE: October 2014

EXISTING VISUAL SETTING

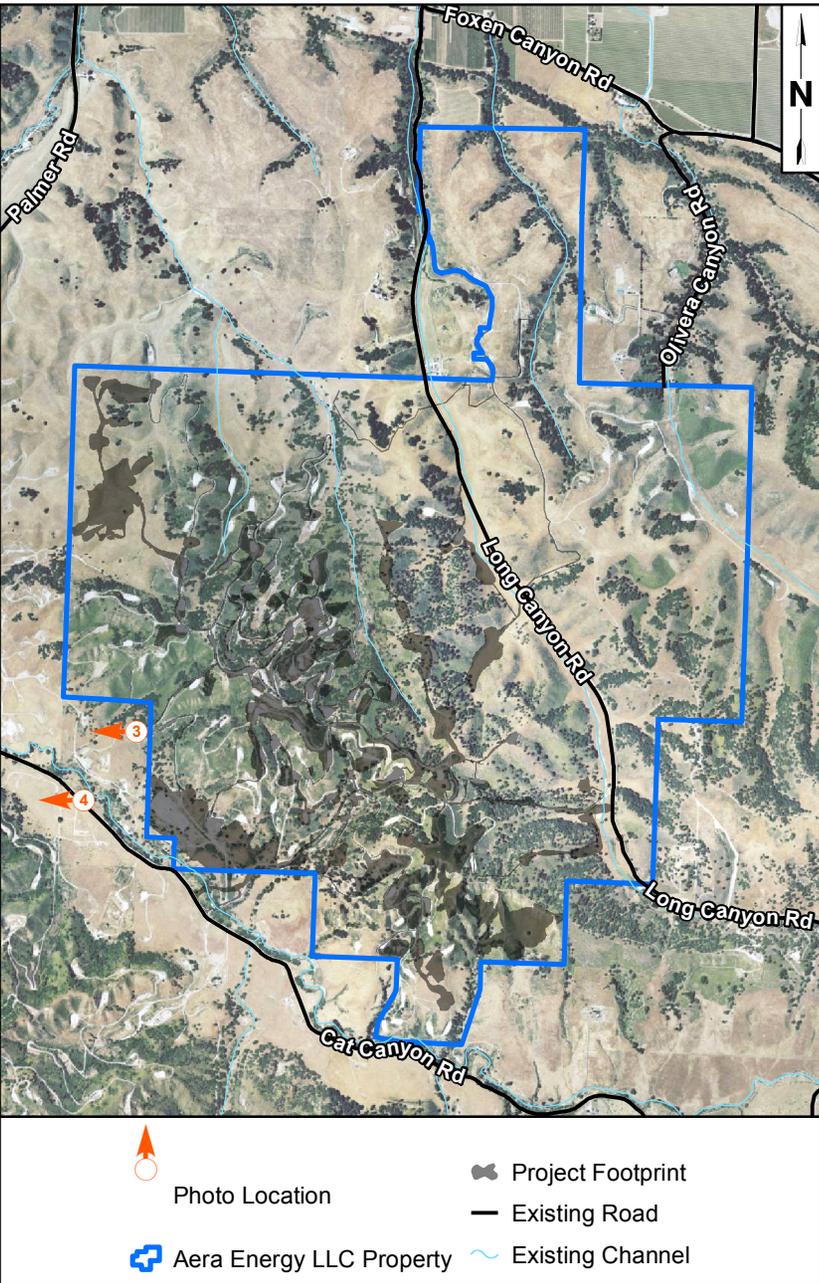
FIGURE
 4.10-1

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 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Feet
 Notes: This map was created for informational and display purposes only.

PROJECT NAME:
**EAST CAT CANYON
 OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**
 PROJECT NUMBER: 1002-0455 DATE: October 2014

EXISTING VISUAL SETTING

FIGURE
 4.10-2

Z:\Krisin\GIS Maps\Map Project\East Cat Canyon\Figure 4.10-2 Existing Visual Setting.mxd

5. Utilities, including television, shall be placed underground in new developments in accordance with the rules and regulations of the California Public Utilities Commission, except where cost of undergrounding would be so high as to deny service.

4.10.3 Impact Assessment Standards

The analysis of visual resource impacts is generally considered subjective. As such, evaluation of potential aesthetic impacts has been based upon a review of the current Project plans, area maps, aerial photographs, regulatory setting, and visual simulations prepared by RRM Design Group (Appendix P). These criteria have been evaluated against the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Thresholds Guidelines Manual (2008). The Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual generally states that a project may have the potential to create a significantly adverse aesthetic impact if it would impact important visual resources, obstruct public views, remove significant amounts of vegetation, substantially alter the natural character of the landscape, or involve extensive grading visible from public areas. The guidelines address public, not private views.

4.10.4 Impact Analysis

Project plans include construction and restoration of approximately 73 well pads, of which 24.7 percent will consist of expanding and improving existing well pads. Up to 315 wells will be drilled on those pads. Approximately nine miles of access roads will be constructed, of which 43.7 percent will consist of improving and expanding existing roads. In addition, a new natural gas import pipeline, overhead electrical transmission lines, and an electrical substation are components of the proposed Project.

Project activities will primarily take place within the Project site which is located between Cat Canyon Road (to the west and south) and Long Canyon Road (to the east) within an existing oil field. Construction equipment will not be a permanent fixture within the facility and will only be visible at each location long enough to complete activities associated with each specific phase of construction. Following grading and construction activities, the equipment will be moved to other areas of the Project site and away from public view. As such, views of construction equipment will be short-term and transitory in nature.

Permanent Project facilities that are visible from public roadways include the central processing facility and production site office located in the south-western portion of the Project site, which is visible from portions of Cat Canyon Road. The following discussion is based on the visual simulations depicting the permanent Project facilities and infrastructure (RRM Design Group, 2014) and included as Figures 4.10-3 – Visual Simulation Photo Location and 4.10-4 through 4.10-11 – Visual Simulations 1,2, 3, and 4 with Existing and Proposed Views.

4.10.4.1 Impacts to Visual and Aesthetic Resources Resulting from Construction and Operation within Project site.

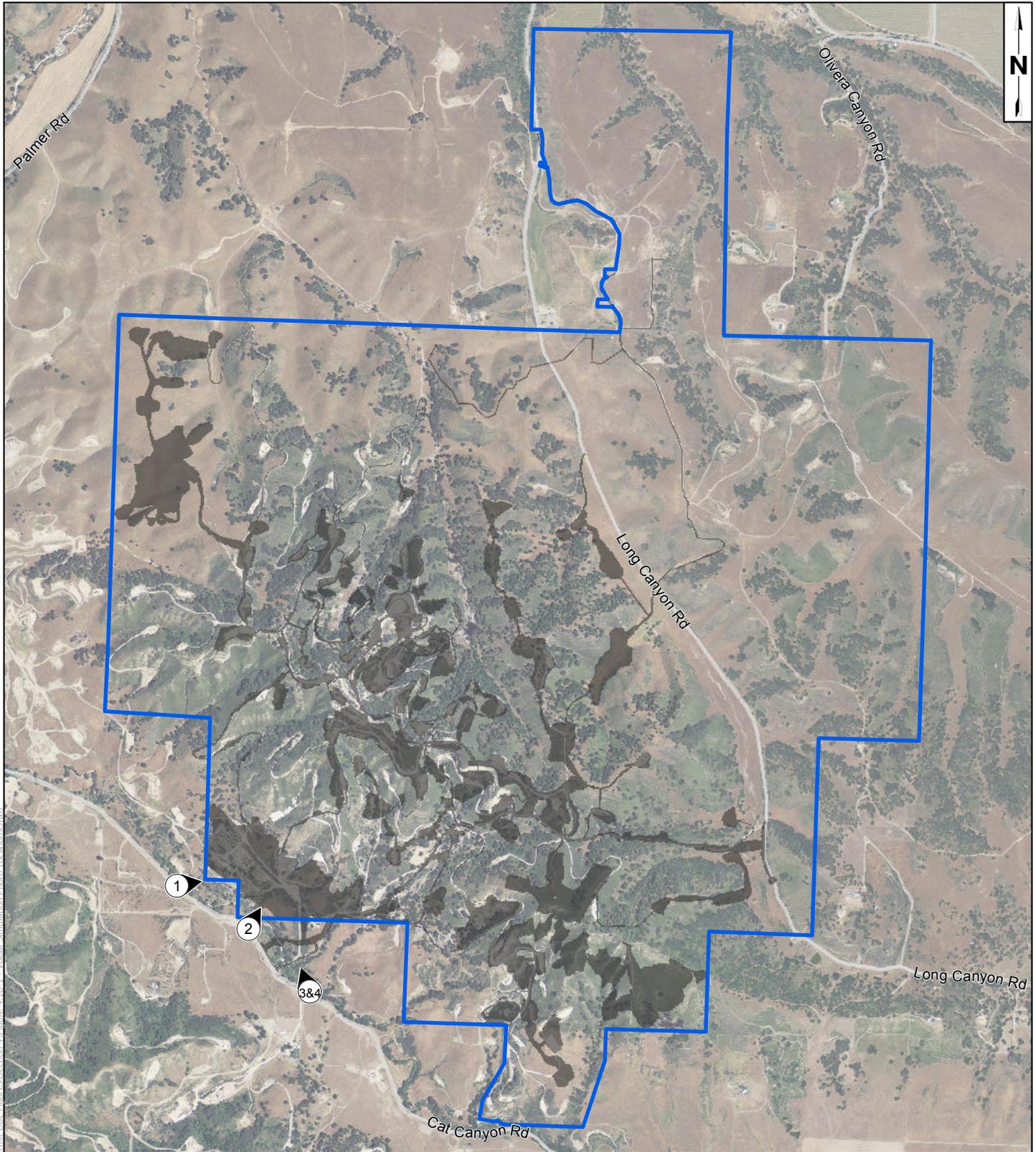
Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting From Permanent Project Facility Operations. The Project is located within an existing oil production area, surrounded by grazing land. The Project site is predominantly shielded from public view by sloping hills and vegetation. The nearest scenic highway is State Highway 101 which is located more than three miles to the west with no views of the Project site. Permanent Project facilities are primarily associated with the central processing facility and production site office located in the south-western portion of

the Project site, which is visible from portions of Cat Canyon Road. As shown in Figures 4.10-4 through 4.10-11, permanent Project components will be painted muted, natural colors, in accordance with the existing visual character of the area. With the implementation of Project Measure AEST-1, the Project has been designed so that the height, scale, and design of structures are compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment. The architectural style of the structures will be approved by the County Board of Architectural Review prior to the start of construction activities. Based on these design requirements as well as the limited views of Project facilities from public areas, impacts to the existing visual environment from permanent facilities associated with the Project are considered less than significant.

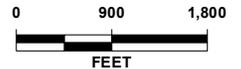
In addition, and in accordance with County of Santa Barbara - Comprehensive Plan (Land Use Element) Visual Resource Policies, Aera will implement a landscaping plan for the Project central processing facility (Project Measure AEST-2). The landscaping plan will implement a conceptual planting schedule that includes landscaping of trees, shrubbery and groundcover for erosion control. In accordance with the County of Santa Barbara's Planner's Guide to Conditions of Approval and Mitigation Measures (2011), Project landscaping will be compatible with the character of the surroundings. Implementation of the landscaping plan will further reduce Project visual and aesthetic impacts by ensuring that permanent facilities associated with the Project remain visually appealing and within the existing visual character of the Project site.

Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting from Removal of Vegetation and Alteration of Natural Landforms. The Project site is located within the existing Cat Canyon oil production area. Properties adjacent to the Project site are presently used for oil production, grazing operations, and other agricultural production. As such, permanent Project operations will be in accordance with the existing visual character of the area. Due to past and on-going oil field maintenance activities and cattle grazing that occurs throughout the Project site, much of the area has been previously disturbed; however, due to the steep and rugged terrain, many inaccessible areas visible from the roadways are dominated by native and non-native vegetation. According to the County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan Open Space Element (2009), topography, vegetation, and water resources are important determinants of scenic values in primarily undeveloped areas.

The Project has been designed to minimize grading and land disturbance by utilizing existing roads, well pads, cleared areas, and contours wherever possible. The Project has also been designed to avoid unnecessary tree and vegetation removal by minimizing the number and size of new well pads, by routing new roads around canopies, and by designing the new facility campus as a network of smaller parking lot and building spaces that better fit in the existing spaces between native tree canopies. Out of the entire Project site 2,111.7 total acres, (2,107.8 acres of Aera-owned parcels and 3.9 acres of Project footprint located on adjacent parcels), 305.1 acres, or 14.4 percent will be graded. Of the 305.1 acres that will be graded, 64.2 acres or 21.0 percent is previously disturbed. The net new disturbance acreage is approximately 240.9 acres or 11.4 percent of the total site acreage.



-  Aera Energy LLC Property
-  Project Footprint
-  Photo Location and Orientation



Source: DPSI 2013 Land Survey, NAIP 2012 Image, RRM Design Group
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Feet
 Notes: This map was created for informational and display purposes only.

PROJECT NAME: EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
PROJECT NUMBER: 1002-0455	DATE: March 2016

VISUAL SIMULATION PHOTO LOCATIONS

**FIGURE
4.10-3**

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Source: RRM Design Group

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PROJECT NUMBER:	1002-0455	DATE: October 2014

**VISUAL SIMULATION 1 -
EXISTING VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-4



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Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME:	EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
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**VISUAL SIMULATION 1 -
PROPOSED VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-5



\\Kristin\GIS Maps\Mapa - Project\East Cat Canyon\Permit - Doc\Figure 4.10-6 - Visual Simulation 2 - Existing View.mxd

Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME: EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
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**VISUAL SIMULATION 2 -
EXISTING VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-6



© Kristin GIS Maps/Mapa Project/East Cat Canyon/Permit Doc/Eclipse Section 4/Figure 4.10-5 Visual Simulation 2 - Proposed View.rvt

Source: RRM Design Group

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**VISUAL SIMULATION 2 -
PROPOSED VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-7



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Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME:	EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
PROJECT NUMBER:	1002-0455	DATE: October 2014

**VISUAL SIMULATION 3 -
EXISTING VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-8



\\kristin.gis.maps.wjpa-project\East-Cat-Canyon\Permit-Doc-Equise\Section 4\Figure 4.10-9_Visual Simulation 3 - Proposed View.mxd

Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME:	EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
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**VISUAL SIMULATION 3 -
PROPOSED VIEW**

FIGURE
4.10-9



Source: RRM Design Group

Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME:	EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
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VISUAL SIMULATION 4
- EXISTING VIEW

FIGURE
4.10-10



\\KRISHN\GIS\Maps\Jobs\Project\East Cat Canyon\Permit_Doc\Figure Section 4\Figure 4.10-7_Visual Simulation 3 - Proposed View.mxd

Source: RRM Design Group

PROJECT NAME:	EAST CAT CANYON OIL FIELD REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
PROJECT NUMBER:	1002-0455	DATE: March 2016

VISUAL SIMULATION 4
- PROPOSED VIEW

FIGURE
4.10-11

Construction of the Project will result in temporary impacts to vegetated areas as a result of cut and fill slope grading, above-ground pipeline installation activities, and fuel management activities associated with Santa Barbara County Fire Department defensible space standards. Permanent impacts to vegetated areas and alterations of natural landforms will result from construction of permanent Project facilities and infrastructure.

As discussed in Section 4.5 – Biological Resources, in order to reduce impacts to native vegetation to the greatest extent possible; avoidance and minimization measures such as revegetation/relocation plans will be implemented. These revegetation/relocation plans include a Project-specific revegetation plan, an Oak Tree Protection Plan (Appendix F-1), and an Oak Tree Replacement Plan (Appendix F-1). Implementation of these plans will limit the removal of native and non-native vegetation during Project activities and provide replacement vegetation communities for areas where removal is unavoidable. Following Project activities, these plans will require restoration of vegetated areas to the extent feasible. In addition, many well pads and other graded slopes will be revegetated pursuant to the Project's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan post construction. Due to limited views of the Project facilities from public areas (as depicted in Figures 4.10-4 through 4.10-11), impacts to the existing visual environment are considered less than significant. Implementation of Project avoidance and minimization measures will further reduce impacts to the visual environment from Project vegetation removal and alteration of natural landforms.

Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting From Temporary Construction Activities and Drilling at Well Pads. Project plans include construction and restoration of approximately 72 well pads, drilling of up to 296 wells on those pads, and construction and restoration of over nine miles of field access roads. Planned wells include oil/gas production wells, steam injection wells, observation wells, water production wells, water injection wells, and fresh groundwater wells. Well drilling and completion and well-related infrastructure, and surface facility construction will occur over a two phase, multi-year program. Phase I will occur from Year -3 through Year 1; and Phase II will occur from Year 2 through Year 30 or beyond.

Drilling activities will take place within the fenced areas of the Project site which is located between Cat Canyon Road (to the west) and Long Canyon Road (to the east) within an existing oil field. The Project site is predominantly shielded from public view by sloping hills and vegetation. The nearest roadways are Long Canyon Road and Cat Canyon Road which allow minimal views of some portions of the Project site. The nearest scenic highway is State Highway 101 which is located more than three miles to the west. As such, the public will have very limited views of most Project-related activities associated with drilling.

Well Pad Construction. Well pad construction will require the use of typical construction equipment including, but not limited to, scrapers, graders, gravel trucks, excavators, flat-bed and haul trucks, cement trucks and mixers, backhoes and roll compactors. Construction equipment will not be a permanent fixture within the facility and will only be visible at each location long enough to complete activities associated with well pad construction. Following grading and construction activities, the equipment will be moved to other areas of the Project facility and away from public view. As such, views of construction equipment will be short-term and transitory in nature and will not significantly block or obstruct views from nearby public areas. Due to the temporary nature of potential visual impacts, as well as the limited number of places from which

the Project can be viewed from public locations, the impact to visual and aesthetic resources within the Project site during well pad construction is considered less than significant.

Drilling. Drilling activities at the well pads will require the use of a standard drilling rig (anticipated to have a drill mast of at least 90 feet in height). Drilling will be conducted in accordance with all statewide onshore well regulations and enforced by the California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources. As such, all drilling and completion activities will be designed to minimize adverse impacts to the environment, in accordance with good oilfield practices.

The majority of Project well pads are located within topographical features that block potential views of the drilling rig from public roadways. Drilling rigs will only be visible at well pads located on ridges with elevations sufficient to allow for the mast to be seen above existing vegetation and topography. Following drilling activities at each well pad, the drilling rig will be taken down and moved to another portion of the Project site. As such, any views of the drilling mast available from public roadways will be temporary. Due to the temporary and mobile nature of potential visual impacts, as well as the limited number of places from which the drilling mast could be observed onsite, potential impacts to visual and aesthetic resources from drilling activities is considered less than significant.

Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting From Introduction of Light or Glare. Drilling activities are required to operate 24 hours per day. Nighttime operations will require lighting to be used for the safety of construction and drill workers. In addition, drill masts will be marked and lighted in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration requirements to avoid potential safety hazards with aircraft traffic. During nighttime construction and drilling rig operations, lighting will be pointed downward to minimize glare and lighting impacts to adjacent property owners. Although lighting associated with these activities may be partially visible at night from some public roadways within the Project area, the impact will be temporary in nature as drilling will be transitory around the Project site. Upon completion of nighttime construction and drilling activities, safety lighting will be installed at each well site. All exterior lighting will be focused downward and on areas requiring direct illumination (Project Measure AEST-3). Project lighting will be designed to avoid interference with vehicular traffic on Cat Canyon Road and wherever else necessary. Due to the temporary and mobile nature of potential lighting and glare impacts, as well as the limited number of places from which lighting will be visible, potential impacts to visual and aesthetic resources from light and glare are considered less than significant.

4.10.4.2 Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting from the Natural Gas Import Pipeline Installation.

The Project will require a new natural gas import pipeline, approximately 14 miles in length. Upgraded fiber optic communications lines will be installed concurrently with the natural gas import pipeline along portions of the same proposed pipeline corridor. Consistent with current utility pipeline installation standards, the pipeline and telecommunication lines will be installed under existing road pavement to the maximum extent achievable.

The new pipeline will be fed from an existing gas line at Divide Station along Graciosa Road and will terminate at the proposed central processing plant located in the southwest corner of the Project site. The majority of the pipeline will be installed under existing roadways. The proposed natural gas transmission pipeline will be installed using conventional trenching, as well as horizontal directional drilling, slick bore, and jack-and-bore techniques. As such, natural gas

transmission pipeline construction will require the use of typical construction and trenching equipment. Construction equipment will not be a permanent fixture and will only be visible along each reach of the pipeline route long enough to complete activities associated with natural gas transmission pipeline installation. Following pipeline installation activities, the equipment will be moved along the pipeline route. As such, views of pipeline installation equipment will be short-term and transitory in nature and will not significantly block or obstruct views from nearby public areas. Once pipeline installation is complete, only minor supporting equipment and maintenance will be required. Due to the temporary nature of potential visual impacts, as well as the limited length of the proposed natural gas pipeline route, the impact to visual and aesthetic resources within the area during natural gas pipeline installation activities is considered less than significant.

4.10.4.3 Impacts to Visual Resources Resulting From the Electrical Power Transmission Service Line and Substation Installation.

Existing facilities at the Project site are currently being served electrical power from a distribution system via the Palmer Substation. As Project activities commence and load demand increases, the Project will require transmission-level electrical power service at the Project site. Electrical power to the Project site is to be provided by new overhead transmission lines which will tap into an existing electrical power transmission service route as well as an electrical substation. The substation will consist of incoming metering and switching equipment, transformers to lower the voltage to distribution level, and protective equipment to monitor and provide protection for the various circuits providing power to the central processing facility and field lifting equipment.

Installation equipment associated with the electrical power transmission service line and substation will not be a permanent fixture within the Project site. Following installation activities, the equipment will be removed from along the transmission line and substation area. As such, views of electrical power transmission service line and substation construction equipment will be short-term in nature and will not significantly block or obstruct views from nearby public roadways.

Permanent substation components will be painted muted, natural colors in accordance with the existing visual character of the Project site (Project Measure AEST-1). As such, the Project electrical power transmission service line and substation has been designed to be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment. Based on these design requirements, as well as the limited views of Project facilities from public areas, impacts to the existing visual environment from temporary construction equipment and permanent facilities associated with the electrical power transmission service line and substation are considered less than significant.

4.10.5 Project-Incorporated Avoidance and Minimization Measures

The following measures have been incorporated into Project design to minimize the impact to public visual receptors within the Project area. With the implementation of the recommended avoidance and minimization measures, impacts to visual resources will be avoided.

- **AEST-1. Neutral Paint Coloring for Permanent Facilities.** Permanent structures and equipment will be painted and maintained with muted, natural colors to blend in with the existing visual character of the Project area.

- **AEST-2. Project Landscaping.** In accordance with County of Santa Barbara Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Visual Resource Policies, Aera will implement a landscaping plan for the central processing facility within the design package for the East Cat Canyon Oil Field Redevelopment Project. The landscaping plan will include a conceptual planting schedule that includes landscaping of trees, shrubbery and groundcover for erosion control. All Project landscaping will consist of drought-tolerant native and/or low-water use/Mediterranean type species. In accordance with County of Santa Barbara design requirements, Project landscaping will adequately screen the Project site from surrounding land uses. The landscaping plan will include drought tolerant natives and compatible species requiring minimal irrigation.
- **AEST-3. Night Lighting and Glare Reduction.** Temporary construction lighting will be kept to the minimum feasible consistent with safety needs to minimize ambient light emissions during construction. To the extent practicable, nighttime lighting will be directed downward and light shields installed to reduce ambient lighting to adjacent properties and habitats.

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