
2 Environmental Setting

As required by Section 15125 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this chapter of the environmental impact report (EIR) includes a brief description of the existing physical conditions at the Pacifica Project (proposed project or project) site and the surrounding vicinity at the time of filing of the Notice of Preparation. Although in some cases current data was not available to represent conditions at the time of filing the Notice of Preparation, the most recent data available is described in this chapter and serves as the CEQA baseline for this EIR. This chapter also provides an overview of the regulatory setting on the project site pursuant to Section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines. Additional details and descriptions of the existing conditions specific to each environmental issue can be found throughout Chapter 4, Environmental Analysis. The environmental conditions discussed in this chapter and throughout the EIR constitute the baseline conditions by which the significance of impacts will be determined.

2.1 Project Setting

2.1.1 Project Location

The proposed site consists of the former Pacifica Elementary School located at 4991 Macario Drive (Assessor's Parcel Numbers [APNs] 122-190-19, 122-190-22, and 157-070-42) and encompasses 14.55 acres (Figure 3-1, Project Location). The proposed project site is located at the corner of Monica Circle and Macario Drive. The project site is bound to the north by single-family homes fronting Claire Drive; to the east by single-family homes fronting Roja Drive; to the south by single-family homes fronting North Redondo Drive; and to the west by open space. The project site is approximately 0.5 miles from the San Luis Rey Transit Center. The project site is located approximately 2 miles north of State Route (SR) 76 and approximately 6 miles north of SR 78.

2.1.2 Site Background

Historical maps indicate that the property was located within a canyon until around 1946, when an earthen dam was constructed, creating a large reservoir. Over time, the reservoir's storage volumes were reduced, and in 1967 the reservoir appears to have been drained and was subsequently filled to create the building pad for the school site. As shown in Appendix G, school records indicate the school was built in 1972 and opened in 1980. Buildings first appear in historical aerial photographs in 1978. The buildings were ultimately demolished in 2004 after the buildings were found to be unsafe to withstand an earthquake, and modular structures were used until the school closed in 2007. The school district continued using the site in the mid-2010s. During this time, trailers were placed at the site, and it was used as a "swing school" to hold classes while permanent schools were under modernization. The site now includes remnant pavement, a parking lot, and playground areas, as well as curbs, an overgrown sandbox, a shade structure, and a large field regularly mowed (for fire abatement) about every 2.5 months per the school district facilities department. Disturbed habitat makes up the majority of the site, including the slopes around the perimeter, as well as the western portion of the site.

2.1.3 Existing Land Uses

On-Site Land Uses

The project site is currently disturbed, vacant land, consisting of the former footprint of Pacifica Elementary School. The project site does not feature any existing uses.

Surrounding Land Uses

Uses in the vicinity of the project site primarily include residential development, commercial, and open space. The project site abuts existing single-family residential developments to the north, south, and east, and open space to the west. Residential uses within the surrounding neighborhood include a range of housing types, including single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments. Other nearby uses include Libby Lake Park, Libby Elementary School, and retail uses.

2.1.4 Existing General Plan Land Use Designations

The project site has a General Plan land use designation of CI – Civic Institutional. Properties abutting the project site are designated as SFD-R – Single Family Detached Residential to the north, east, and south, and OS – Open Space to the west. Areas in the surrounding neighborhood are designated with various residential designations (SFD-R, MDA-R, MDB-R, and MDC-R), Civic Institutional (CI), Open Space (OS), and various commercial designations (GC, NC, and SC).

2.1.5 Existing Zoning Designations

The project site is currently zoned as PS – Public/Semipublic. Areas immediately surrounding the site are zoned RS – Single-Family Residential and OS – Open Space. Zoning designations in the surrounding neighborhood also include various residential designations (RS, RM-A, RM-B, and RM-C), PS, Open Space (OS), and various commercial designations (CG, CN, and CS-L). These zoning designations are described in detail in Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning, of this EIR.

2.2 Regional Setting

2.2.1 Climate

The local climate within the project area is characterized as semi-arid with consistently mild, warmer temperatures throughout the year. The average summertime high temperature in the region is approximately 75.9°F, with highs reaching 76.8°F on average during the months of July through September. The average wintertime low temperature is approximately 50.4°F, reaching as low as 48.5°F on average from November through March. Average precipitation in the local area is approximately 10.34 inches per year, with the bulk of precipitation falling from November through March (WRCC 2021).

2.2.2 Air Basin

The project site is located within the San Diego Air Basin (SDAB) and is subject to San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) guidelines and regulations. The SDAB is 1 of 15 air basins that geographically divide California.

The SDAB lies in the southwest corner of California, composes the entire San Diego region, and covers approximately 4,260 square miles.

The climate of the San Diego region, as in most of Southern California, is influenced by the strength and position of the semi-permanent high-pressure system over the Pacific Ocean, known as the Pacific High. This high-pressure ridge over the West Coast often creates a pattern of late-night and early-morning low clouds, hazy afternoon sunshine, daytime onshore breezes, and little temperature variation year-round. The SDAB is characterized as a Mediterranean climate with dry, warm summers and mild, occasionally wet winters. Average temperatures range (in degrees Fahrenheit) from the mid-40s to the high 90s, with an average of 201 days warmer than 70°F. The SDAB experiences 9 to 13 inches of rainfall annually, with most of the region's precipitation falling from November through March, with infrequent (approximately 10%) precipitation during the summer. El Niño and La Niña patterns have large effects on the annual rainfall received in San Diego, where San Diego receives less than normal rainfall during La Niña years.

Air quality standards have been set pursuant to the federal and state Clean Air Acts, which are referred to as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and California Ambient Air Quality Standards. The favorable climate of San Diego also works to create air pollution problems. The SDAB has been determined to be in non-attainment of the federal and state ozone (O₃) air quality standards. In the fall months, the SDAB is often impacted by Santa Ana winds, which can transport air pollution from the South Coast Air Basin and increase O₃ concentrations in the San Diego area. Under certain conditions, atmospheric oscillation results in the offshore transport of air from the Los Angeles region to San Diego County (County) that also raises the O₃ concentrations within the SDAB. Due to this condition and the associated Clean Air Act requirements, a Regional Air Quality Strategy (RAQS) has been developed to address reducing O₃ in the SDAB. Refer to Section 4.2, Air Quality, for additional information regarding air quality in the SDAB.

2.2.3 Soils

Soils on site are classified as Las Flores loamy fine sand (LeE2), 15% to 30% slopes, eroded; Grangeville fine sandy loam (GoA), 0% to 2% slopes; and Las Flores loamy fine sand (LeC2), 5% to 9% slopes, eroded. The Las Flores soils have a very slow infiltration rate, and the Grangeville soils have a moderate infiltration rate. Refer to Section 4.3, Biological Resources, and Section 4.6, Geology and Soils, for additional information.

2.2.4 Terrain

The topography of the project site is generally flat but features slopes around the perimeter. The project site primarily consists of vacant land and disturbed vegetation. Elevations range from approximately 80 feet to 120 feet above mean sea level.

2.2.5 Watersheds and Hydrology

The project site is located within the San Luis Rey Hydrologic Unit (903), within the Lower San Luis Hydrologic Area (903.1) and the Mission Hydrologic Sub-Area (903.11) of the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (San Diego RWQCB 2021). The major surface waterbodies in the vicinity of the project are Libby Lake and the San Luis Rey River, which flows east to west. The portion of the San Luis Rey River southeast of the project site flows approximately 6 miles until its confluence with the Pacific Ocean. Within this Hydrologic Sub-Area, downstream impaired water bodies listed under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act include the Pacific Ocean shoreline and

San Luis Rey River mouth. The technical analysis identifies potential groundwater at a depth greater than 45 feet below the ground surface. Refer to Section 4.9, Hydrology and Water Quality, for additional details.

2.2.6 Vegetation and Habitats

Based on species composition and general physiognomy, Dudek biologists mapped one vegetation community and one land cover within the project site: disturbed habitat (9.28 acres) and urban/developed (5.27 acres). Disturbed habitat makes up the majority of the site, including the slopes around the perimeter and the majority of the western portion of the site. No jurisdictional aquatic features were documented within the project site. Due to lack of suitable habitat and vegetation on the project site, no focused surveys for any sensitive or special-status species were conducted. No critical habitat for any special-status species is designated on the project site. Additionally, no special-status plants or wildlife were observed on the project site, nor any are expected to occur.

2.2.7 Utilities

Potable water is currently provided by the Water Utilities Department of the City of Oceanside (City). The project site is located in an area of the City that is well developed and adjacent to residential uses. The project site is situated in the east-central portion of the City in an area served by the Talone 320 Pressure Zone. The nearest existing 320 Pressure Zone public water lines in the vicinity of the project are 6-inch-diameter water lines in Monica Circle and Malaga Drive and 8-inch-diameter water lines in Macario Drive and Roja Drive.

In Oceanside, wastewater is collected and treated by the City's Water Utilities Department, Wastewater Division. The Wastewater Division provides wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal services of sewage for the City in accordance with applicable laws and standards. The existing public sewer system in the project area consists of an 8-inch-diameter gravity line that terminates as an existing public sewer lift station located at the entrance to the school site (Pacifica School Lift station), near the intersection of Monica Drive and Macario Drive. The lift station then conveys flows via a force main to a gravity pipe in Roja Drive. A second 8-inch-diameter gravity line is located in Malaga Drive at the southeastern boundary of the project. The existing pipe in Malaga Drive also conveys flows to the gravity line in Roja Drive. From Roja Drive, flows are conveyed via Luna Drive and Redondo Drive southward and ultimately connect to the 15-inch- and 27-inch-diameter trunk lines in North River Road. Refer to Section 4.17, Utilities and Service Systems, for additional details. The project site also includes an on-site existing gravity sewer that is no longer in use.

On-site runoff from the northeastern portion of the site drains in a southwesterly direction and is then captured via existing grate inlets and routed to the existing 24-inch storm drain. The existing 24-inch storm drain runs across the site in a southwesterly direction carrying flows (along with bypassed off-site flows coming from Macario Drive) to a discharge location in an existing channel. Runoff from the rest of the site is conveyed via surface flow in a southwesterly direction towards the discharge point. Refer to Section 4.9 for additional details.

2.3 Applicable Planning Documents

The following describes local and regional planning documents applicable to the proposed project. Per CEQA Guidelines Section 15125, Environmental Setting, the environmental setting chapter of an EIR shall discuss any inconsistencies between the project and applicable General Plans, Specific Plans, and regional plans. Below is a summary of such regional and local plans, as well as a brief disclosure of any inconsistencies. Additional details

regarding the consistency with applicable planning documents can be found in each individual environmental issue area section in this EIR, as noted below.

2.3.1 City of Oceanside General Plan

California law requires that each county and city adopt a General Plan “for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which...bears relation to its planning” (California Government Code, Section 65300). Each General Plan must be internally consistent, and all discretionary land use plans and projects must also be consistent with the General Plan.

The City’s General Plan is the primary source of long-range planning and policy direction that is used to guide development within the City and serves as a policy guide for determining the appropriate physical development and character of the City. The City’s General Plan is founded on the community’s vision for the City and expresses the community’s long-range goals. The document was last reformatted in 2002 to rearrange the text and include introductory material. The City’s General Plan contains the following 10 elements: Land Use (amended in 1986), Circulation (updated in 2012), Recreational Trails (adopted in 1996), Housing (2021–2029 Housing Element adopted in June 2021), Environmental Resource Management (adopted in 1975), Public Safety (adopted 1975), Noise (adopted in 1974), Community Facilities (adopted in 1990), Hazardous Waste Management (adopted in 1990), and Military Reservation (adopted in 1981). Each of the City’s General Plan elements contains goals for the future of the City. In addition, the City’s General Plan contains a land use map, which depicts the planned land uses for properties within the City. Objectives and policies established for each land use designation are described within the City’s General Plan’s Land Use Element (City of Oceanside 2002).

In 2019, the City Council adopted Phase I of the General Plan Update, which included the Economic Development Element, Energy and Climate Action Element, and Climate Action Plan. Phase 2 of the General Plan Update will include updating the City’s existing Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Environmental Resource Management, Community Facilities, Public Safety, and Noise Elements. This planning process aims to revisit important planning elements last updated in 2002 (City of Oceanside 2021a). The adopted Housing Element (2021–2029) is pending certification by the California Department of Housing and Development. An EIR is being prepared for the City’s General Plan Update, which will address all topic areas outlined in the CEQA Appendix G Environmental Checklist Form. The comment period for the scoping phase of the General Plan Update EIR ran from May 24 to June 23, 2021. The onwardoceanside.com website provides up-to-date information about the General Plan Update. Additionally, in June 2021 the City released five project background reports, which was considered the first major technical step in the process of updating the City’s General Plan and preparing the Smart and Sustainable Corridors Specific Plan. The background reports, (Baseline Economic and Market Analysis; Land Use and Community Resources, Mobility, Environmental Resources, and Smart and Sustainable Corridors Background Report) provide a comprehensive analysis of resources, trends, and concerns that will frame and guide choices for the long-term development of the City. These five background reports can also be found on the onwardoceanside.com website.

2.3.2 City of Oceanside Zoning Ordinance

The City’s Zoning Ordinance is the primary implementation tool for the Land Use Element. The Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map identify specific types of land use, intensity of land use, and development and performance standards applicable to specific areas and parcels of land within the City (City of Oceanside 2021b).

2.3.3 Oceanside Subarea Plan of the North County Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan

The project site is located within the North County Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) area. The North County MHCP is a long-term regional conservation plan established to protect sensitive species and habitats in northern San Diego County (SANDAG 2003). The North County MHCP is divided into seven subarea plans—one for each jurisdiction within the MHCP area—that will be permitted and implemented separately from one another. The Oceanside Subarea Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (Oceanside Subarea Plan) has been prepared, and although the Oceanside Subarea Plan has not been approved or permitted, it is used as a guidance document for projects in the City (City of Oceanside 2010). Refer to Section 4.3 for additional discussion regarding the Oceanside Subarea Plan.

2.3.4 Regional Plans

In addition to the above City planning documents, the following regional plans are also applicable to the proposed project.

SANDAG's San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan (Regional Plan) combines the region's two most important existing planning documents—the Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) and the Regional Transportation Plan and its Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). The RCP, adopted in 2004, laid out key principles for managing the region's growth while preserving natural resources and limiting urban sprawl. The plan covered eight policy areas, including urban form, transportation, housing, healthy environment, economic prosperity, public facilities, our borders, and social equity. These policy areas were addressed in the 2050 RTP/SCS and are now fully integrated into the Regional Plan.

The SANDAG Board of Directors adopted the 2021 Regional Plan on December 10, 2021. The 2021 Regional Plan is a 30-year plan that considers growth, movement, and residential location around the region. The 2021 Regional Plan combines the RTP/SCS and RCP. As such, the 2021 Regional Plan must comply with specific state and federal mandates. These include an SCS, per California Senate Bill 375, that achieves greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB); compliance with federal civil rights requirements (Title VI); environmental justice considerations; air quality conformity; and public participation (SANDAG 2021). For additional information regarding the Regional Plan, refer to Sections 4.2, Air Quality; 4.7, Greenhouse Gas Emissions; 4.10 Land Use and Planning; and 4.15, Transportation.

Regional Air Quality Plan

SDAPCD and SANDAG are responsible for developing and implementing the clean air plan for attainment and maintenance of the ambient air quality standards in the SDAB. The RAQS for the SDAB was initially adopted in 1991 and is updated on a triennial basis, most recently in 2016 (SDAPCD 2016). As discussed under Section 2.2.2, Air Basin, above, the SDAB is in non-attainment for O₃. The RAQS outlines SDAPCD's plans and control measures designed to attain the state air quality standards for O₃. The RAQS relies on information from CARB and SANDAG, including mobile and area source emissions, as well as information regarding projected growth in the County and the cities in the County, to forecast future emissions and then determine from that the strategies necessary for the reduction of emissions through regulatory controls. The CARB mobile source emission projections and SANDAG growth projections are based on population, vehicle trends, and land use plans developed by the County and the

cities in the County as part of the development of the General Plans (SANDAG 2017a, 2017b). The project would be consistent with the RAQS considering the project complies with the General Plan and zoning for the site. For additional information regarding air quality plans, refer to Section 4.2.

Water Quality Plans

San Luis Rey Watershed Water Quality Improvement Plan

On May 8, 2013, the Regional Water Quality Control Board approved a regional municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit that is applicable to local jurisdictions within San Diego, southern Orange, and southwestern Riverside Counties (Order No. R9-2013-0001). The region-wide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (Regional MS4 Permit) sets the framework for municipalities, such as the City, to implement a collaborative watershed-based approach to restore and maintain the health of surface waters. The Regional MS4 Permit requires development of Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs) that will allow the City (and other interested parties) to prioritize and address pollutants through an appropriate suite of best management practices in each watershed.

The City lies within the San Luis Rey Watershed Management Area and is one of the responsible municipalities for the watershed's WQIP. The San Luis Rey Watershed WQIP was accepted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board on February 12, 2016, and finalized in March 2016 (City of Oceanside et al. 2016). The WQIP includes strategies to improve water quality in receiving waterbodies. The project would comply with these strategies and would be consistent with this plan. For additional information on water quality, refer to Section 4.9.

Oceanside Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

The County's Regional Airport Authority develops and adopts airport land use compatibility plans (ALUCPs) for each public use and military airport within its jurisdiction. The Oceanside Municipal ALUCP, as amended in December 2010, provides policies to ensure compatibility with the airport and surrounding land uses. These policies span various topics including noise, overflight zones, and safety. The ALUCP is based upon the Federal Aviation Administration approved Airport Layout Plan. The project site is not located within the noise or safety zones designated by this ALUCP, nor is the project site within the Airport Overflight Notification Area. For additional information regarding the ALUCP, refer to Section 4.8, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Section 4.11, Noise.

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