

## 3.1 Aesthetics

This section addresses the aesthetic and visual quality impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed project. This section includes a description of existing visual conditions in the project area and an evaluation of potential effects on visual resources and public view corridors. Presumed views from public viewpoints are also discussed, based on existing visual conditions at the project site and surrounding area.

For purposes of this analysis, visual or aesthetic resources are generally defined as the natural and built landscape features that can be seen. The overall visual character of a given area results from the combination of natural landscape features, including landform, water and vegetation patterns, as well as the presence of built features such as buildings, roads, and other structures.

The impact analysis considers view obstruction, negative aesthetic effects, and light and glare effects. This visual assessment is based on field observations of the project site and surroundings in addition to a review of topographic maps, project drawings, and technical data, and aerial and ground-level photographs of the project areas.

### 3.1.1 Setting

#### Regional Setting

The Antelope Valley encompasses approximately 2,400 square miles in northern Los Angeles County, southern Kern County and western San Bernardino County. It is located within the western portion of the Mojave Desert. The area is bordered on the southwest by the San Gabriel Mountains, on the northwest by the Tehachapi Mountains, and on the east by a series of hills and buttes that generally follow the San Bernardino county line. Lake Palmdale is a reservoir located in the southern area of the City of Palmdale that provides water storage and offers recreational uses to members of the Palmdale Fin and Feather Club.

Major roadway corridors in the project vicinity include the Antelope Valley Freeway (State Route 14), State Route 138, and the Angeles Forest Highway. The two state routes overlap on a shared segment between Avenue D in Lancaster and Palmdale Boulevard in Palmdale. The Angeles Forest Highway connects Palmdale to the Angeles Crest Highway (State Route 2).

#### Project Area Setting

The proposed project would be located within the City of Palmdale, the City of Lancaster, the Town of Rosamond, and unincorporated communities within Los Angeles and Kern Counties. The Antelope Valley is a triangular shaped, topographically closed basin that primarily has a desert climate. Vegetation is typical of the western Mojave Desert that includes creosote and desert shrubs. Certain portions of the valley contain large stands of Joshua Trees. The perimeter of the valley includes low brush covered hills transitioning into the Tehachapi Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains to the west and south.

In the City of Lancaster, major visual resources include the local views of the surrounding buttes, Quartz Hill, and long distance panoramas of the San Gabriel Mountains and desert expanses. In the City of Palmdale, the Lamont Odett Vista Point, just off the Antelope Valley Freeway, provides a view of Lake Palmdale and the city. The Godde Hills Road winds up the Portal Ridge Mountains and overlooks the entire Antelope Valley.

The proposed pump stations and reservoirs would be located in open, low brush covered areas as shown in **Figure 3.1-1**. Proposed reservoirs would primarily be located atop hillsides while proposed pump stations would be located in both hilly and flat areas.

## 3.1.2 Regulatory Framework

### State

#### ***State Scenic Highway Program***

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) administers the State Scenic Highways Program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from projects that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways (Sections 260 *et seq.* of the California Streets and Highways Code). Scenic highway corridors are defined as the land generally adjacent to and visible by motorists from a scenic highway. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. These highways are identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code.

There are no officially designated state scenic highways within the project area (Caltrans, 2007).

### Local

#### ***Kern County General Plan***

The following policies of the Land Use/Conservation/Open Space Element, General Provision of the General Plan are relevant to the proposed project.

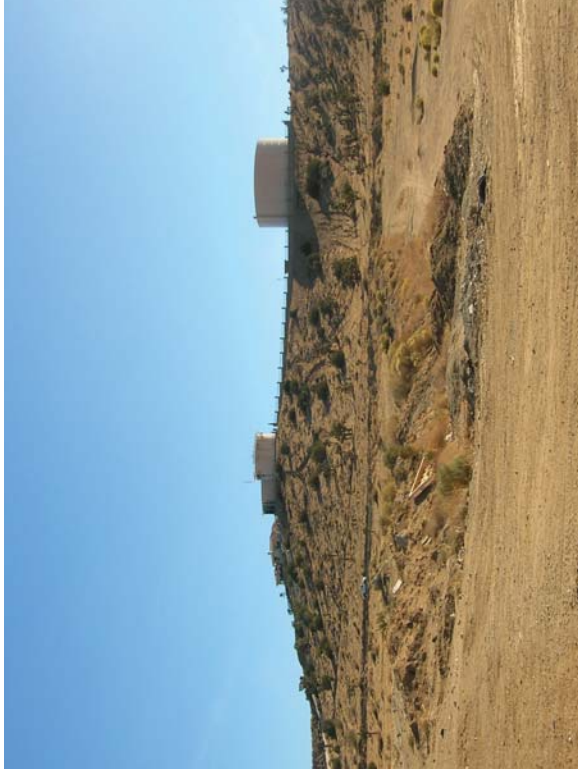
**Policy 47:** Ensure that light and glare from discretionary new development projects are minimized in rural as well as urban areas.

**Policy 48:** Encourage the use of low-glare lighting to minimize nighttime glare effects on neighboring properties.

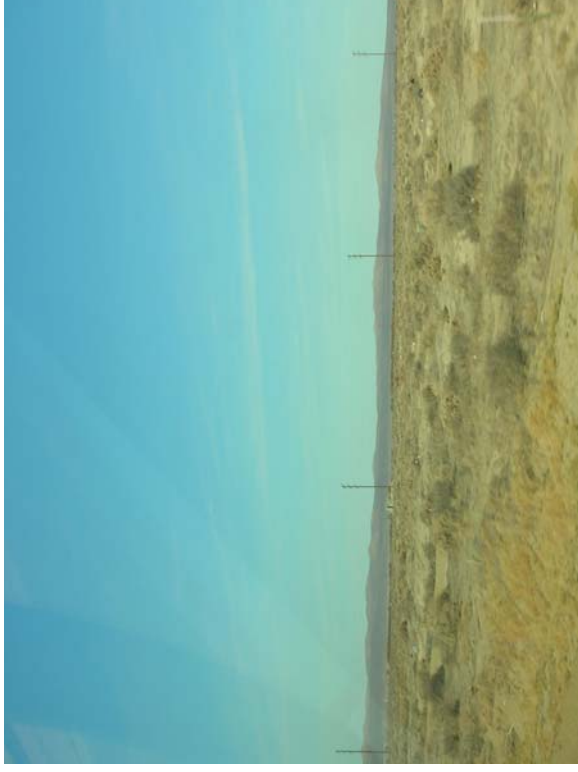
#### ***Los Angeles County General Plan***

The following policy of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan is relevant to the proposed project:

**Policy C/OS 11.1:** Identify and protect scenic resources, especially those threatened by potential development.



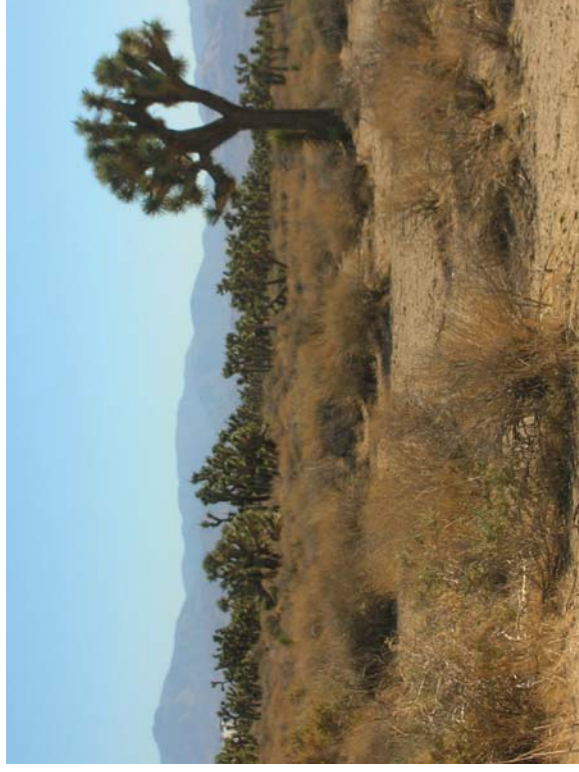
1. View of proposed Reservoir 1 location



2. View of proposed Distribution Pump Station 1.



3. View of proposed Reservoir 3 location



4. View of proposed Booster Pump Station 1

### ***Palmdale Hillside Management Ordinance***

The Palmdale Hillside Management Ordinance was designed to help maintain the visual, open space, and recreational amenities provided by hillside areas bordering the city. The ordinance protects against insensitive development and contains standards which apply to areas with a natural slope of ten percent or more. The standards were designed to preserve open space, natural grades, scenic views, and visually prominent landforms.

**Section 100.18D:** Development is sited in a manner that substantially retains the visual qualities and natural elevations of the significant ridgelines and prominent landforms forming the City's skyline backdrop, as defined in this Article, and preserves those portions of the ridgelines visible from the Antelope Valley floor, or adjacent valleys, as a scenic skyline backdrop to the City.

### ***City of Palmdale General Plan***

The Environmental Resources section of the City of Palmdale General Plan (City of Palmdale, 1993) governs the aesthetic resources of the city. The City of Palmdale General Plan policy that is related to scenic resources is as follows:

**Policy ER1.2.2:** The following roadways are designated as City scenic highways. Apply special design standards for projects adjacent to these highways (as contained in the implementation section) in order to protect their scenic qualities.

- Barrel Springs Road
- Tierra Subida Highway
- Sierra Highway, South of Avenue S
- Elizabeth Lake Road
- Pearblossom Highway
- Bouquet Canyon Road
- Godde Hill Road
- Antelope Valley Freeway, south of Rayburn Road

The proposed project corridor is adjacent to or is visible from Elizabeth Lake Road, Barrel Springs Road, and Pearblossom Highway.

### ***City of Lancaster General Plan***

The Scenic Resources section of the City of Lancaster General Plan (City of Lancaster, 1997) governs the aesthetic resources of the city. The section states that the protection of scenic resources is critical to Lancaster's long-term objective of achieving and maintaining the character of designated scenic corridors.

## **3.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

### **Significance Criteria**

For the purposes of this PEIR and consistency with Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*, applicable local plans, and agency and professional standards, the project would have a significant impact on aesthetics if it would:

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

The significance determination is based on several evaluation criteria, including the extent of project visibility from sensitive viewing areas such as designated scenic routes, public open space, or residential areas; the degree to which the various project elements would contrast with or be integrated into the existing landscape; the extent of change in the landscape's composition and character; and the number and sensitivity of viewers.

## Impacts Discussion

The project area does not include any designated or eligible State Scenic Highways as designated by Caltrans. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact scenic resources within a state scenic highway corridor.

The use of recycled water for municipal and industrial applications, agricultural irrigation, and power plant cooling would also not result in significant impacts to designated scenic resources as such uses would not change the visual character or quality of the area.

All other impacts to existing aesthetic resources resulting from construction and operation of the proposed project at both the project level and program level are discussed below. The impacts are considered for all proposed project components, including both short-term construction and long-term operational phases.

### ***Project-Level Impacts***

#### **Recycled Water Pipeline**

##### **Impact 3.1-1: Construction of the proposed recycled water pipeline could generate short-term impacts to aesthetic resources. Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Construction of the proposed recycled water pipelines would result in short-term impacts to aesthetic resources. Construction activities would require the use of heavy equipment and storage of materials at construction sites. During construction, excavated areas, stockpiled soils, and other materials within the construction easement and staging areas would constitute negative aesthetic elements in the visual landscape. These negative aesthetic elements would directly affect scenic vistas as viewed from scenic highways designated by the Palmdale General Plan. The proposed pipeline construction would coincide with Elizabeth Lake Road and be visible from Pearblossom Highway and Barrel Springs Road that are designated scenic highways by the City of Palmdale. However, with incorporation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-1, the disturbed areas would be restored to preconstruction conditions and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-1:** Following construction activities, the implementing agencies shall restore disturbed areas by reestablishing pre-existing conditions including topography, repaving roadways, replanting trees, and/or reseeding with a native seed mix typical of the immediate surrounding area. The implementing agencies shall be responsible for monitoring the replanted areas to ensure that revegetation is successful.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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### ***Program-Level Impacts***

#### **Storage Reservoirs & Pump Stations**

**Impact 3.1-2: Construction and operation of the proposed storage reservoirs and pump stations could result in significant impacts to aesthetic resources. Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Construction of the proposed storage reservoirs and pump stations would result in short-term impacts to aesthetic resources. Construction activities would require the use of heavy equipment and storage of materials on-site. During construction, excavated areas, stockpiled soils, and other materials at the construction site and staging areas would constitute negative aesthetic elements in the visual landscape. However, these effects would be temporary during project construction and would not significantly impact the long-term visual character of the area.

Operation of the storage reservoirs and pump stations would cause permanent long-term impacts to aesthetic resources. The structures would contrast with the surrounding landscape and potentially would be incompatible with the existing views and vistas within the project area. Reservoir 1 would be located on Quartz Hill and would be visible from Avenue M. Other reservoirs and pump stations would be visible from scenic highways designated by the City of Palmdale. Reservoir 2 may be visible from Elizabeth Lake Road, Reservoir 3 from Barrel Springs Road, and Booster Pump Station 2 from Pearblossom Highway. This would have a potentially significant effect on scenic highway corridors. The following mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant levels by requiring implementation of landscaping and design elements to minimize the visual contrast of the reservoirs and pump stations and blend these facilities into the surrounding landscape.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-2a:** The implementing agencies shall attempt to locate pump stations and reservoirs in areas that are compatible with existing views and vistas.

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-2b:** During project design, the implementing agencies shall prepare a landscape plan for each aboveground project component. The landscape plan shall include measures to restore disturbed areas by reestablishing existing topography, including replanting trees and/or reseeding with a native seed mix typical of the immediately surrounding area. The landscape plan shall include a required seed mix and

plant palate. Vegetation screening shall be included in the landscape plan in order to shield proposed aboveground facilities from public view. The landscape plan shall include a monitoring plan to ensure that the site restoration and the establishment of vegetation is successful.

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-2c:** The implementing agencies shall ensure that storage reservoir designs include non-glare exterior coatings that are colored an earth tone to blend in with the surrounding landscape.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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**Impact 3.1-3: Operation of the proposed storage reservoirs and pump stations could result in additional light and glare impacts due to nighttime security lighting. Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Exterior lighting would be installed around the proposed storage reservoirs and pump stations. Exterior lighting could adversely affect day and nighttime views by introducing a new source of light and glare. Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce potentially significant lighting impacts to a less-than-significant level.

#### ***Mitigation Measures***

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-3:** The exterior lighting installed around the storage reservoirs and pump stations shall be of a minimum standard required to ensure safe visibility. Lighting shall be shielded and directed downward, away from neighboring land uses to minimize impacts of light and glare.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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#### **Recycled Water End Users**

**Impact 3.1-4: Application of recycled water for groundwater recharge could result in significant impacts to aesthetic resources. Less than Significant with Mitigation.**

Implementation of future GRRPs would require construction of recharge basins at suitable locations. As described in Chapter 2, Project Description, construction of recharge basins would involve recontouring of site soils to form earthen berms which could be as tall as six feet above ground level. Construction of the recharge basins would introduce a new contrasting element into the landscape. Depending on the locations selected, recharge basins could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. It is anticipated that recharge basins would be constructed in open space, rural, or agricultural areas and berms would be revegetated to blend in with the visual character of the area. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-2b would reduce impacts to visual character by requiring implementing agencies to develop landscape plans during the design phase of future GRRPs. The landscape plan would require site

restoration after construction of recharge basins, revegetation using native and local species, and vegetation screening, if necessary and appropriate, to screen facilities from public view. Implementation of the landscape plan would minimize the visual contrast of the recharge basins and blend these facilities into the surrounding landscape, resulting in less than significant impacts to visual character and aesthetic resources.

***Mitigation Measure***

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-2b.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Less than significant.