

4.10 Aesthetics

4.10.1 Existing Conditions

4.10.1.1 *Project Area Aesthetics*

The Project Area is situated in the eastern portion of the City of San Diego, primarily in the Navajo Community Plan area but also includes portions in the Tierrasanta Community and the College Area Community Plan areas. The City of San Diego has adopted Community Plans for each of these areas that provide guidelines related to land use and development. New development needs to be consistent with the appropriate Community Plan guidelines and policies related to aesthetics. The portion of the Project Area located within the College Area Community Plan Area is not an area identified in the Community Plan as an area requiring special consideration for aesthetics.

The Project Area is generally urban in character. The open space areas included within the Project Area include the San Diego River and the surrounding native habitat. Portions of the Project Area have public views to the San Diego River and Mission Trails Regional Park. Neighborhoods within the community planning areas are walkable and residential uses are generally within walking distance to schools or shopping areas. The existing development within the Project Area includes commercial office, industrial-related structures, public and institutional facilities, parks, open space, and vacant land.

The Project Area is located in a valley, generally bounded to the east, west and south by relatively flat developed land and to the north and portions of the east by hillsides and canyons that help to frame the community area and define the pattern of development within the neighborhoods. The San Diego River has historically shaped the overall nature of the area's topography. The river currently traverses Mission Trails Regional Park and Mission Gorge, and runs along Mission Gorge Road in the northern portion of the Project Area, flowing from northeast to southwest. The portion of the river located in the northeast section of the Navajo community has been significantly altered as a result of an ongoing sand and gravel extraction operation. Much of the area in and around the river has already been mined and is currently being used for industrial and contractor storage and operation uses. A mix of retail, industrial and industrial office park uses have been developed along the portion of the river that forms portions of the northern and western boundary of the Project Area.

A. Navajo Community Plan

The Navajo community is characterized by a wide variety of natural features including flat mesas, steep canyons, and rolling hills. The most prominent feature in the Project Area is the San Diego River and Mission Trails Regional Park. Elevations within the community range from a low of around 100 feet above sea level at the westerly edge of Mission Gorge to 1,591 feet at the peak of Cowles Mountain, the highest point in the City of San Diego. Several streets and other public areas offer framed public views of panoramic aesthetic features such as the open space areas to the north of the community or to Lake Murray and its surrounding native habitats.

The Navajo Community contains a diverse land use development pattern with a majority of the area maintaining low to medium residential densities, while the commercial and industrial uses are focused along the main traffic corridors of Mission Gorge Road and Navajo Road.

The Navajo Community Plan's goals and recommendations, which directly apply to the aesthetics of the Project Area, include the following:

- Grading and landscaping standards should be improved. Hillside cuts, in particular, must be better controlled to preserve the natural topography;
- Enhance and maintain the aesthetic qualities of the San Diego River corridor as part of the open space system;
- The rear elevations of buildings which face the San Diego River or are visible from the street should be as well-detailed and visually interesting as the front elevations;
- Buildings developed adjacent to the river should be set back 150 feet from the river to avoid glare and shading impacts to the habitat;
- Continue the ongoing efforts to revitalize the commercial areas along Mission Gorge Road, establish one or more Business Improvement District;
- Site design should provide adequate visual buffers surrounding uses, such as with the use of landscaping or grade separation;
- Develop commercial areas which have desirably distinctive qualities in their design, appearance and operation;
- Improve the appearance of the existing strip commercial development on Mission Gorge Road between Interstate 8 and Zion Avenue by reducing signs, improving landscaping and architectural design, providing consistent building setbacks and providing adequate off-street parking;
- The removal of off-premise signs and the consolidation of multiple on-premise signs should be pursued during project reviews in an effort to reduce sign clutter and enhance the visual appearance of Mission Gorge Road;
- Ensure that industrial appearance and effects of industrial uses are compatible with the character of the surrounding residential and commercial areas and the sensitive resources of the San Diego River; and,
- Development along Mission Gorge Road shall comply with the regulations included in the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ).

B. Tierrasanta Community Plan

The Tierrasanta Community is generally a low density residential community. The presence of commercial areas are designated only where necessary to support the residential community, and the presence of industrial activity is limited to a small, isolated site. The plan seeks to capitalize on the open spaces of the cayonlands interspersed throughout the community as well as the expansive open space resource of the

nearby Mission Trails Regional Park. The San Diego River runs along the majority of the Tierrasanta Community Plan's southern planning boundary and is primarily considered in two ways: flood control and recreation.

The Tierrasanta Community plan's goals and recommendations, which directly apply to the aesthetics of the Project Area, include the following:

- Future development of areas that abut the Mission Trails Regional Park should be sensitive to it, as proposed within the Urban Design Element of the Tierrasanta Community Plan; and,
- To protect assets of Mission Trails Regional Park from degradation by surrounding development.

4.10.1.2 Light and Glare

The Project Area is urbanized and substantial light and glare is produced by existing development. The Project Area currently consists of commercial, office, industrial development, public institutions, vacant land, and open space. Existing levels of light and glare are that of an urban, developed community and neighborhoods with daytime glare from building windows, automobile windshields, and paved surfaces. Nighttime light from billboards, commercial signage, buildings, automobile headlights and parking lot/security lighting also exist throughout the Project Area.

4.10.2 Impact Threshold

For the purposes of this EIR, the proposed project will have a significant aesthetic impact if it will:

- *Block a view through a designated view corridor as shown in an adopted community plan, or the General Plan;*
- *Cause a substantial view blockage of a public resource (such as ocean) that is considered significant by the applicable community plan;*
- *Exceed the allowed height or bulk regulations, and this excess causes unnecessary view blockage;*
- *Have a cumulative effect by opening up a new area for development, which will ultimately cause "extensive" view blockage;*
- *Significantly alter natural landform features;*
- *Introduce development that is incompatible with surrounding land uses and community character;*
or
- *Substantially increase light and glare affecting surrounding properties.*

4.10.3 Impact

4.10.3.1 Project Area Aesthetics

Implementation of the proposed Redevelopment Project will result in redevelopment of existing parcels and new development within the Project Area. Future redevelopment activities will need to be consistent

with the applicable Community Plans and the approval process for activities covered by the pertinent Community Plan.

Specific development proposals for the Project Area are unknown; however, any future development activities within the Project Area could potentially impact public views or scenic vistas from public areas, primarily with respect to the San Diego River.

As redevelopment activities proceed within the Project Area, each individual development proposal will need to comply with the development standards of the City of San Diego Land Development Code and the adopted design guidelines of the community or neighborhood in which it is located. Development activities that occur in the Project Area will be reviewed by the City for compliance with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plan goals and objectives regarding aesthetics. Implementation of mitigation measure A1 would reduce the potential impact to a level less than significant.

Implementation of the proposed project is anticipated to result in the replacement of older undesirable development with new development that would be in compliance with the goals, objectives, and recommendations contained in the applicable Community Plans. This is anticipated to protect the existing desirable aesthetics within the Project Area and eliminate the undesirable conditions of the buildings and landscape in the Project Area.

The existing topography of the Project Area is relatively flat. There are no significant natural landforms located within the Project Area, although significant natural landforms are located adjacent to the Project Area including Mission Trails Regional Park. Because future redevelopment will be required to comply with the City's development standards related to landform including design, preservation of public views, and compatibility with surrounding land uses, the project will not significantly alter natural landform features and no significant impact associated with landform will occur.

4.10.3.2 *Light and Glare*

As redevelopment occurs in the Project Area, the potential for light and glare will increase on a localized basis. Additional lighting sources may be introduced into new areas, and redevelopment has the potential to increase the overall affect of nighttime lighting within and adjacent to the Project Area. Additionally, glare from building surfaces would increase if future redevelopment proposals within the Project Area include the construction of buildings with greater reflective surfaces.

Because the Project Area is generally urban, proposed redevelopment activities are not anticipated to result in a significant increase in light and glare in the area. The future redevelopment is required to comply with current City development standards, which address lighting standards and compatibility of lighting with surrounding land uses. The impact associated with an increase in light and glare is considered less than significant.

4.10.4 Significance of Impact

Future redevelopment activities within the Project Area may result in significant aesthetic impacts.

4.10.5 Mitigation Measures

A1 As redevelopment activities proceed within the Project Area, each individual development proposal shall be reviewed by the Agency and City to comply with the development standards of the City of San Diego Land Development Code and the adopted design guidelines of the Community Plans. Specific redevelopment projects shall incorporate appropriate design details and principals consistent with the Navajo and Tierrasanta Community Plans, including:

- The rear elevations of buildings which face the San Diego River or are visible from the street should be as well-detailed and visually interesting as the front elevations;
- Buildings developed adjacent to the river should be set back from the river to avoid glare and shading impacts to the habitat;
- Improve the appearance of the existing strip commercial development on Mission Gorge Road between Interstate 8 and Zion Avenue by reducing signs, improving landscaping and architectural design, providing consistent building setbacks and providing adequate off-street parking;
- Site design should provide adequate visual buffers surrounding uses, such as with the use of landscaping or grade separation;
- Develop commercial areas which have desirably distinctive qualities in their design, appearance and operation;
- Ensure that industrial appearance and effects of industrial uses are compatible with the character of the surrounding residential and commercial areas and the sensitive resources of the San Diego River;
- Development along Mission Gorge Road shall comply with the regulations included in the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone (CPIOZ); and,
- Future development of areas within the Tierrasanta Community that abut the Mission Trails regional Park should be sensitive to it, as proposed within the Urban Design Element of the Tierrasanta Community Plan.

4.10.6 Conclusion

Implementation of Mitigation Measure A1 will reduce the potential aesthetic impact as a result of future redevelopment activities within the Project Area to a level less than significant.

This page intentionally left blank.

4.11 Water Quality/Hydrology

4.11.1 Existing Conditions

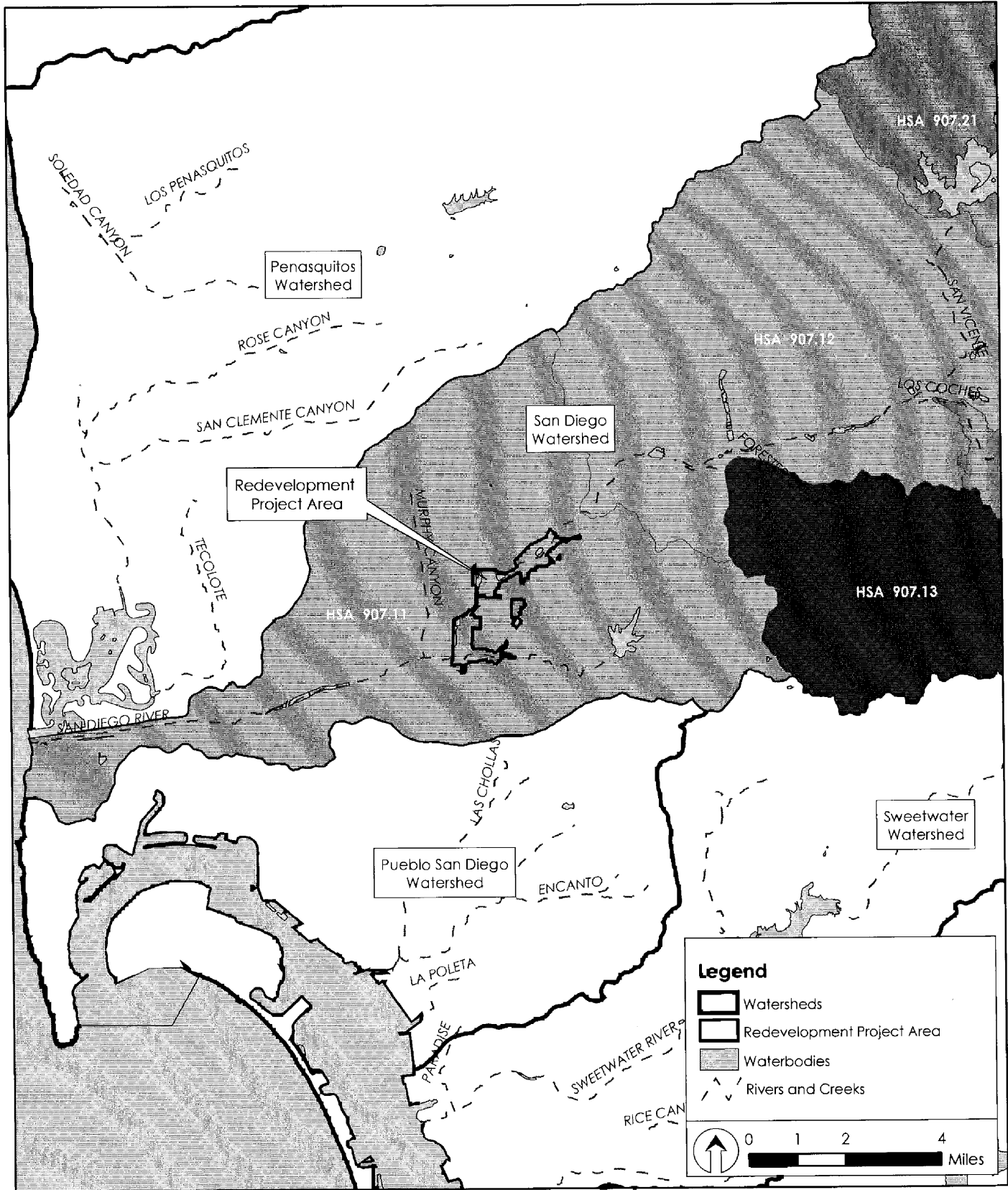
4.11.1.1 *Hydrologic Setting*

The Project Area is located with the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) Basin. The Basin contains 11 major drainage basins which encompass most of San Diego County, parts of southwestern Riverside County and southwestern Orange County. The San Diego Hydrologic Region is over three million acres in size and generally drains westerly toward the Pacific Ocean. The Project Area is located in the Mission San Diego Hydrologic Subarea of the Lower San Diego Hydrologic Area, within the San Diego River Hydrologic Unit (HU). With a land area of approximately 440 square miles, the San Diego River HU is the second largest HU in San Diego County. It also has the highest population (~475,000) of the County's watersheds and contains portions of the cities of San Diego, El Cajon, La Mesa, Poway, and Santee and several unincorporated communities (Figure 4.11-1).

The Project Area generally drains to the west, toward the San Diego River, the primary hydrologic feature within the Project Area. The San Diego River bisects the northwestern portion of Subarea B and generally defines the western boundary of Subareas A and B of the Project Area as it flows from southwest through the western portion of the Navajo Community to Mission Valley. The San Diego River originated in the mountains northwest of the historic town of Julian and runs southwestward through an unincorporated, largely uninhabited area of San Diego County before entering El Capitan Reservoir. Downstream of El Capitan Reservoir, the river flows westward through the Cities of Santee and San Diego and past Famosa Slough to the San Diego River Estuary. The river discharges into the Pacific Ocean just south of the jettied entrance of Mission Bay in the community of Ocean Beach. Through most of the Project Area, the San Diego River is channelized. Primary tributaries to the San Diego River include Boulder Creek, Cedar Creek, Conejos Creek, Chocolate Creek, Los Coches Creek, San Vicente Creek, and Forester Creek.

Another significant drainage feature of the Project Area is Alvarado Canyon Creek, which begins at the outfall of Lake Murray. Alvarado Canyon Creek generally parallels Interstate 8 as it flows westward to its confluence with the San Diego River. Alvarado Canyon Creek traverses through the southern portion of Subarea A. Navajo Canyon also drains to Alvarado Canyon Creek. Navajo Canyon is southeast of Subarea C. Currently, the majority of Alvarado Canyon Creek is channelized and the confluence with Navajo Canyon is tenuous due to the highway infrastructure and urban development. Alvarado Canyon Creek drains into the San Diego River in the southwestern portion of Subarea A.

Hydrology within the San Diego River Watershed is currently monitored on a continuous basis through the long-term flow monitoring stations maintained by the United States Geologic Service (USGS), the ALERT system operated by the County Department of Public Works, and a group of other hydrologic and meteorological monitoring stations administered by various local and federal agencies (Baseline Assessment, San Diego River Watershed Management Plan, August 2004). Approximately 85 percent of the total surface water flow occurs from December to May, in response to winter storms that originate in the



SOURCE: SANDAG, SanGIS and BRG Consulting, Inc., 2004

10/20/04



Grantville EIR
 San Diego River Watershed and
 Hydrological Sub-Areas

FIGURE
 4.11-1

Pacific Northwest. Annual rainfall within the San Diego River HU ranges from about 10 inches (25 cm) at the coast to approximately 40 inches (102 cm) in the Cuyamaca Mountains.

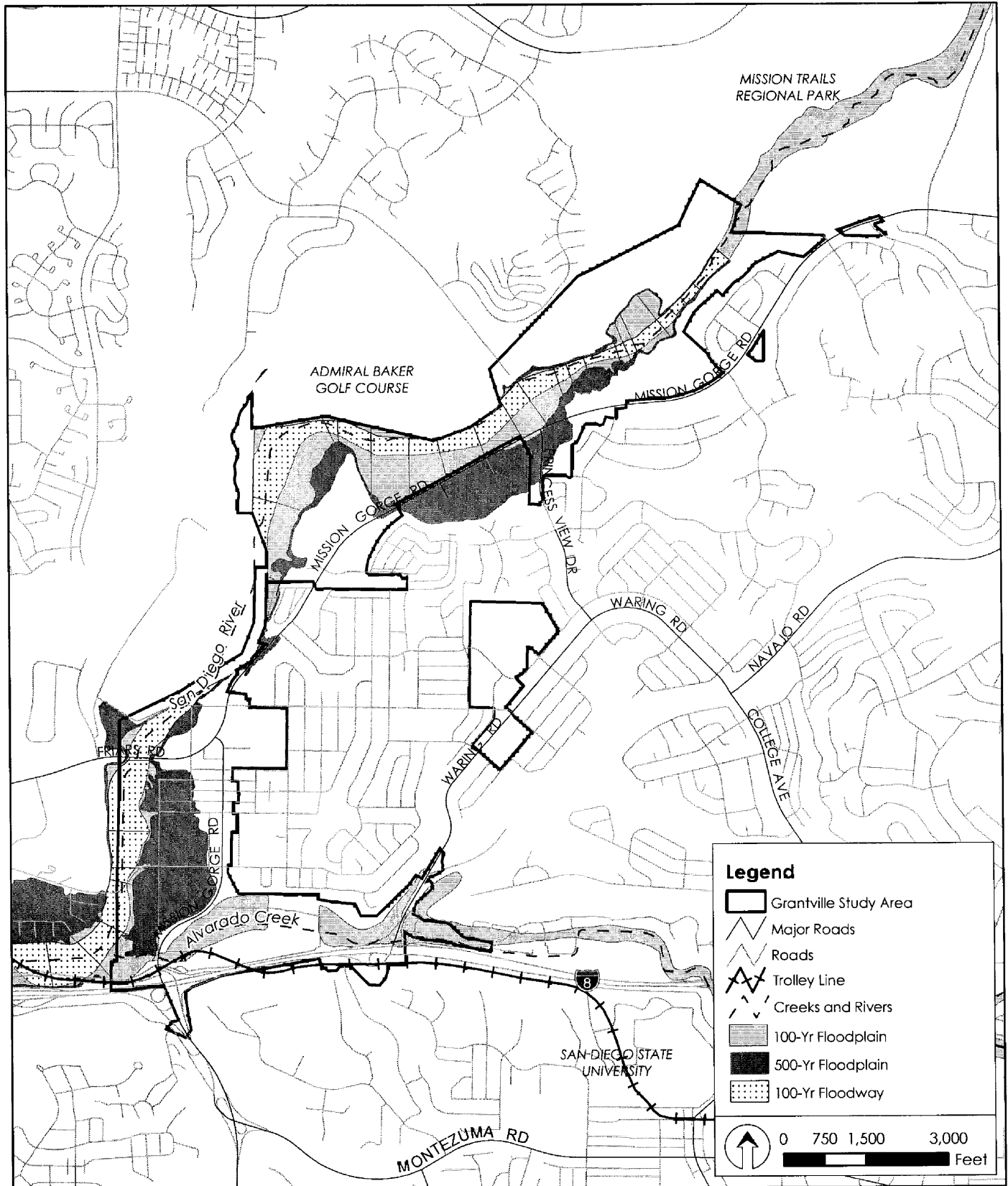
4.11.1.2 *Flooding*

Portions of the Project Area are subject to flooding as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps during rain events. This is attributable to the fact that portions of the Project Area are located within the floodplain, the growth within the San Diego River Watershed (SDRW) that has increased, and inadequate drainage/flooding infrastructure. As depicted on Figure 4.11-2, the southeastern portion of Subarea A is located within the 100-year floodplain of Alvarado Canyon Creek. Portions of the western side of Subarea A are within the 100-year floodplain and floodway of the San Diego River. The northwestern and northern portions of Subarea B are within the 100-year floodplain and floodway of the San Diego River.

The primary flood control measures serving the SDRW include El Capitan Reservoir, San Vicente Reservoir, and the channelized sections of the San Diego River at the estuary, Mission Valley, and Lakeside. The reservoirs have historically functioned effectively in reducing peak flood flows along the lower San Diego River. For example, during the 1980 flood, El Capitan Reservoir absorbed the entire peak flow, while San Vicente Reservoir reduced the peak flow by approximately 50 percent. However, the existing levels of protection afforded by the flood control channel sections may be inadequate in the intensively urbanized Mission Valley area under a 100-year flood. The flood-carrying capacity of the channel at this section may become even less adequate under burned conditions after wildfires such as the 2003 Cedar Fire (Baseline Assessment, San Diego River Watershed Management Plan, August 2004).

The Baseline Assessment, San Diego River Watershed Management Plan, provides the following recommendations to improve short-term flood protection:

- Restore, improve, and maintain drainage system capacities through vegetation clearing and sediment removal;
- Improve flood early warning systems;
- Install, restore, improve, and maintain erosion control and water retention structures, particularly in areas determined to be at high risk of flooding;
- Provide public information (e.g., signage and mailings) on flood hazards, particularly in areas determined to be at high risk to flooding; and
- Adopt guidelines to encourage the "daylighting" of underground culverts as well as the removal of concrete/riprap channel lining as appropriate to improve water quality while maintaining and/or improving the existing level of flood protection.



SOURCE: SanGIS and BRG Consulting, Inc., 2005

3/10/05



Grantville EIR
Floodplain Map

FIGURE
4.11-2

4.11.1.3 Existing Water Quality

A. San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan

Each of the nine regional boards in California is required to adopt a Basin Plan. Basin Plans designate the beneficial uses for all surface and groundwaters in the San Diego Region.

B. Beneficial Uses

Beneficial uses of groundwater and surface water have been established for each water body within the San Diego Basin. According to the RWQCB Basin Plan:

Beneficial uses are defined as the uses of water necessary for the survival or well being of man, plants and wildlife. The uses of water serve to promote the tangible and intangible economic, social and environmental goals of mankind.

Examples include the drinking, swimming, industrial, and agricultural water supply, and the support of fresh and saline aquatic habitats. According to the Basin Plan, beneficial uses have been designated for specific coastal water bodies, inland surface waters, and groundwater.

In 1972, the State Water Quality Control Board (SWQCB) adopted a uniform list and description of beneficial uses to be applied throughout all hydrological basins of the State. Water bodies that have beneficial uses that may be affected by activity in the Project Area are the San Diego River and Alvarado Canyon Creek. Designated beneficial uses for the San Diego River and Alvarado Canyon Creek, include:

- Agricultural supply (AGR);
- Industrial service supply (IND);
- Contact and non-contact water recreation (REC1 and REC2);
- Warm freshwater habitat (WARM);
- Cold freshwater habitat (COLD);
- Wildlife habitat (WILD); and
- Rare, threatened, or endangered species (RARE).

Alvarado Canyon Creek is not assigned the beneficial use of RARE. Designated beneficial uses for the mouth of the San Diego River include REC1, REC2, commercial and sport fishing (COMM), estuarine habitat (EST), WILD, RARE, marine habitat (MAR), and migration of aquatic organisms (MIGR).

The following are definitions of the applicable beneficial uses.

Agricultural Supply (AGR) – Includes uses of water for farming, horticulture, or ranching including, but not limited to, irrigation, stock watering, or support of vegetation for range grazing.

Industrial Service Supply (IND) – Includes uses of water for industrial activities that do not depend primarily on water quality including, but not limited to, mining, cooling water supply, hydraulic conveyance, gravel washing, fire protection, or oil well re-pressurization.

Industrial Process Supply (PROC) – Includes uses of water for industrial activities that depend primarily on water quality.

Municipal and Domestic Supply (MUN) – Includes uses of water for community, military, or individual water supply systems including, but not limited to, drinking water supply.

Contact Water Recreation (REC 1) – Includes uses of water for recreational activities involving body contact with water, where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses include, but are not limited to, swimming, wading, water-skiing, skin and SCUBA diving, surfing, white water activities, fishing, or use of natural springs.

Non-contact Water Recreation (REC 2) – Includes the uses of water for recreational activities involving proximity to water, but not normally involving body contact with water, where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses include, but are not limited to, picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tidepool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, or aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above activities.

Warm Freshwater Habitat (WARM) – Includes uses of water that support warm water ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancement of aquatic habitats, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates), or wildlife water and food sources.

Wildlife Habitat (WILD) – Includes uses of water that support terrestrial ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation and enhancement of terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates), or wildlife water and food sources.

Commercial and Sport Fishing (COMM) – Includes the uses of water for commercial or recreational collection of fish, shellfish, or other organisms including, but not limited to, uses involving organisms intended for human consumption or bait purposes.

Estuarine Habitat (EST) – Includes uses of water that support estuarine ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancement of estuarine habitats, vegetation, fish, shellfish, or wildlife (e.g., estuarine mammals, waterfowl, shorebirds).

Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species (RARE) – Includes uses of water that support habitats necessary, at least in part, for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species established under state or federal law as rare, threatened or endangered.

Marine Habitat (MAR) – Includes uses of water that support marine ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancement of marine habitats, vegetation such as kelp, fish, shellfish, or wildlife (e.g., marine mammals, shorebirds).

Migration of Aquatic Organisms (MIGR) – Includes uses of water that support habitats necessary for migration, acclimatization between fresh and salt water, or other temporary activities by aquatic organisms, such as anadromous fish.

