
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

K. MINERAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Revised Draft EIR provides a description of mineral resources within the City of Healdsburg, information on regulations and agencies with jurisdiction over the Project area, proposed General Plan policies relevant to mineral resources, and an analysis of potential impacts related to mineral resources resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan. Information used to prepare this section was taken from the *Healdsburg 2030 General Plan Background Report*– (January 2009 Draft), Division of Mines and Geology’s Special Report 146 Part III *Classification of Aggregate Resource Areas*, City of Healdsburg’s Zoning Map, and the *Sonoma County General Plan 2020 EIR, Geology/Soils Element* (2008).

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Physical Setting

Gravel Extraction Activities

The stretch of the Russian River in the vicinity of the city has been mined extensively for gravel resources, dating back to the 1800s. In recent times, the area used for gravel mining was under the ownership of the Basalt Rock Company, which maintained “vested rights” from 1984¹ to 1985. Vested rights allow the owner to legally proceed with mining operations without acquiring a permit from the City or County. Syar Industries acquired Basalt’s lands and vested rights in 1986. However, vested rights do not exist for the portion of the river within city limits.

Gravel was mined as recently as 2002 along a section of the Russian River just inside the city limits. This site, known as the Healdsburg Bendway site, is adjacent to both rural residences within the county on the south side of the river, and existing residential areas within the city on the opposite side of the river. A use permit and a mining and reclamation plan were approved by the City for this operation in 1983, but its approval has subsequently lapsed. The City has determined that environmental documentation pursuant to the compliance with the CEQA will be needed if and when another application is submitted for mining at this site.

¹ *Healdsburg 2030 General Plan Background Report, Final Draft, January 2008.*

Regulatory Setting

Federal

No federal plans, policies, regulations or laws related to mineral resources are applicable to the proposed Project.

State

Surface Mining and Reclamation Act

Gravel mining operations in the Planning Area, and throughout the state, are subject to the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). The purpose of SMARA is to identify and protect areas containing significant mineral resources. In doing so, SMARA a) regulates surface mining operations to assure that adverse environmental effects are prevented or minimized, b) requires reclamation of mined lands to a usable condition that is readily adaptable to alternative land uses, c) produces and conserves minerals, and considers values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, and aesthetic enjoyment, and d) eliminates residual hazards to the public health and safety. Mining must comply with SMARA through all phases of a project, including the reclamation process.

Regional/Local

Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management Plan

The Sonoma County Aggregate Resources Management (ARM) Plan currently serves as the regulatory document providing guidelines for sound management of aggregate mining in the county. This plan was first adopted by the County in 1980 and updated in 1994. A programmatic EIR was certified by the County at that time for addressing potential impacts from gravel mining in the area subject to the plan. This includes the stretch of the Russian River in the Planning Area that is within the County's jurisdiction.

In addition to compliance with the County ARM Plan, proposed new gravel operations require County approval of a Mining and Reclamation Plan, and a use permit pursuant to County Ordinance 3437, which sets forth local implementation of SMARA.

City of Healdsburg Zoning Ordinance, Article 22

Article 22 of the City's Zoning Ordinance regulates mining and reclamation of mined lands within the city pursuant to SMARA. Provisions of this article require the approval by the City of a conditional use permit, a reclamation plan, and financial assurances for reclamation. It sets forth the standards for plans and operations, and the procedures for the review and approval of mining and reclamation plans as well as the issuance of permits to assure that the intent of SMARA is followed.

PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Proposed General Plan policies and implementation measures that affect or pertain to mineral resources are listed below.

Policies

- *NR-G-1:* The City will provide, through its regulatory powers, for the continued use of properties along the Russian River for sand and gravel mining operations. Such operations shall be allowed to continue for the productive and economic life of the operations so long as it can be demonstrated that no significant adverse environmental impacts to water quality, geomorphology, flooding and biological resources will occur.
- *NR-G-2:* Lands currently being mined for sand and gravel shall be reclaimed and rendered useful for another use upon the cessation of mining activity.

Policy Implementation Measures

The proposed General Plan does not include implementation measures regarding the policies listed above.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Methodology

Impacts associated with mineral resources were evaluated based on the information found within the *Healdsburg 2030 General Plan Background Report* and the *Sonoma County General Plan 2020 EIR, Geology/Soils Element*.

Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed Project would have a significant impact related to mineral resources if it would:

- (a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state; or
- (b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Project Impacts

Impact IV.K-1: The proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.

According to the California Department of Conservation, a state-designated Mineral Resource Zone-2 (MRZ-2) is located in the southeastern area of the city as shown in Figure IV.K-1 (Mineral Resource Zone).² These mineral resources are primarily located along the banks of the Russian River. Classification of an area as a MRZ-2 indicates the existence of a deposit that meets certain criteria for value and marketability. As shown in Figure III-4, proposed land use designations in the southeastern portion of the city include I, MU, PQP, VLR, MR, and LR. According to the proposed General Plan's land use definitions included in Section III (Project Description), mineral extraction is not a specifically stated use in any of the land use designations, however, land use designations under the 1987 General Plan did not specifically state that mineral extraction was allowed either. These areas are zoned as General Industrial (MG) and Agricultural (AG). Quarries, gravel pits, and mines are currently allowed under Article 8 of the City's Zoning Ordinance as a conditionally permitted use in MG and AG zones. As shown in Figure III-3, parts of Sub-Areas F, H, I, J, and K cover southeastern Healdsburg. Although there is a potential for development in those areas, the segments of the Planning Area that overlap the mineral resource zone have either already been built upon or have been designated as open space (OS) or riparian setback (RS) in the 1987 General Plan.³ The OS and RS land uses that overlap the mineral resource zone will remain unchanged under the proposed General Plan. Areas southeast of the Russian River that overlap with the MRZ-2 and are still available for mineral extraction will be reclassified from HI to I under the proposed General Plan. According to the City's current zoning map, industrial land uses southeast of the river are within MG zoning and therefore, quarries, gravel pits, and mines are allowed as conditionally-permitted uses.⁴

There is currently one gravel extraction site within the city limits known as the Healdsburg Bendway site. The site is located within the MRZ-2, southeast of the Russian River and north of the intersection of Healdsburg Avenue and Bailhache Avenue. The operation's use permit has lapsed and the City has determined that environmental documentation will be required if an application is submitted for mining at this site. The proposed General Plan will change the site's land use designation from HI to I. As stated above, the land uses under this designation do not specifically state that mining operations are allowed.

² California Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, *Special Report 146, Part III, Classification of Aggregate Resource Areas, North San Francisco Bay Production-Consumption Region, 1987.*

³ City of Healdsburg, *1987 General Plan, August 3, 1987.*

⁴ City of Healdsburg, *Zoning Map, website: http://www.wifihealdsburg.org/cms/documentstorage/com.tms.cms.document.Document_plan_zonemap/Zoning_Map_counter_4-20-06.pdf, October 1, 2007.*

Figure IV.K-1 Mineral Resource Zone

This page intentionally left blank.

However, as shown in the City's current zoning map, the site is within MG zoning and therefore, quarries, gravel pits, and mines are currently allowed as conditionally-permitted uses.⁵

Although implementation and buildout of the proposed Project has the potential to result in loss of availability of a known mineral resource, state, regional, and local regulations as well as policies listed earlier in this section have been drafted to reduce impacts to mineral resources. Both SMARA and ARM serve to protect existing mineral resources as well as manage mineral resource extraction. Local regulations includes Article 22 of the City's Zoning Ordinance, which regulates mining and reclamation of mined lands within the city pursuant to SMARA.

Mining at the Healdsburg Bendway Site will be protected by Policy NR-G-1, which allows for continued operation of existing sand and gravel mines on the Russian River as long as environmental regulations are being met. Therefore, impacts to a known mineral resource that is of value to the region and the residents of the state would be *less than significant*.

Impact IV.K-2: The proposed Project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan.

Areas within the city have not been delineated as locally important mineral resource recovery sites in the proposed General Plan, subsequent specific plans, or other land use plans. Areas with mineral resources of value to region and state are discussed in Impact IV.K-1. The proposed Project would have *no impact* on the availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Environmental impacts associated with availability of mineral resources are generally site specific. As discussed above, state, regional, and local regulations, including policies from the proposed General Plan will protect existing mineral resources within the Planning Area. As such, development under the proposed General Plan will not result in the loss of availability of mineral resources within the city. Therefore, cumulative impacts relating to mineral resources would be *less than significant*.

MITIGATION MEASURES

With implementation of applicable regulations and the proposed General Plan policies and implementation measures listed above, no mitigation measures would be required for Impacts IV.K-1 and IV.K-2. Additionally, no mitigation measures would be required for cumulative impacts.

⁵ *Ibid.*

This page intentionally left blank.