

5. Environmental Analysis

5.6 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the Proposed Project on human health and the environment due to exposure to hazardous materials or conditions associated with the Project Site, project construction, and project operations.

5.6.1 Environmental Setting

5.6.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

California Fire Codes and Wildland-Urban Interface Codes

In late 2005, the California Building Commission adopted the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Codes, with an effective date of January 2008, as part of a set of California Fire Codes (CFC). The WUI Codes include provisions for ignition-resistant construction standards in WUI areas.

Riverside County

Ordinance No. 787: Fire Code Standards

This Riverside County ordinance adopts and amends the California Fire Code (CFC), where necessary, to safeguard lives and property from fire, explosion hazards, and hazardous conditions in Riverside County. It also governs the issuance of fire permits and the collection of fees. The ordinance helps ensure that structural and nonstructural architectural elements of buildings do not impede emergency egress for fire safety personnel, equipment, or apparatus and do not hinder evacuation from fires, including potential blockages of stairways or fire doors.

This ordinance also addresses implementation of the California Building Code (CBC). The County prescribes performance characteristics and materials to be used to achieve acceptable levels of fire protection and include the WUI fire area building standards. Collectively, the ordinance establishes the requirements and standards for fire hazard reduction regulations in Riverside County (including additions and deletions to the CFC) to fully protect the health, safety, and welfare of existing and future residents and workers of Riverside County.

Among other things, this ordinance ensures that structural and nonstructural architectural elements of the building do not: a) impede emergency egress for fire safety staffing/ personnel, equipment, and apparatus; nor b) hinder evacuation from fire, including potential blockage of stairways or fire doors.

The County of Riverside also requires a development in a high fire hazard area to design and implement fuel modification programs for the interface between developed and natural areas within and adjacent to the Proposed Project area. Such fuel modification plans are subject to approval by the Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD). The fuel modification program requires graduated transition from native vegetation to irrigated landscape. It also establishes parameters for the percent, age, extent, and nature of native plant removal necessary to achieve Riverside County fire prevention standards to protect human lives and property while preserving as much natural habitat as practicable.

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Ordinance No. 695: Hazardous Vegetation

Under this ordinance, the RCFD distributes hazard abatement notices that require property owners to reduce the fuels (flammable grass, brush, etc.) around their property. Ordinance No. 787 sets the requirements for hazard reduction around improved parcels (i.e., those with structures). A minimum 30-foot clearance is required around all structures and may be extended up to 100 feet in areas with severe fire hazards. On unimproved parcels, the property owner is required to disc or mow 100 feet around the property perimeter. This width may be increased or decreased based on visual inspection by the fire chief or chief's designee. The County of Riverside also requires new development in high fire hazard areas to include a fuel modification program for its WUI interface, subject to approval by the RCFD.

As outlined in Riverside County Ordinance No. 659, the County of Riverside also has the ability to require development applicants to pay established fire protection mitigation fees that are to be used by the RCFD to construct new fire protection facilities or provide facilities in lieu of the fee, as approved by the RCFD.

Emergency Response Planning

To adequately protect public health and safety relative to wildland fires and other disaster conditions, the County of Riverside has established the Riverside County Operational Area Emergency Operation Plan (EOP), which addresses planned responses to extraordinary emergency situations, such as natural disasters, technological incidents, and national security emergencies in or affecting Riverside County. The EOP describes the operations of the Riverside County Emergency Operation Center, which is the central management entity responsible for directing and coordinating the various Riverside County departments and other agencies in their emergency response activities. The county response planning involves initial response—structured to minimize the effects of the emergency or disaster—and extended response, which involves the coordination and management of personnel and resources to mitigate an emergency and facilitate the transition to recovery operations. County's initial and extended emergency response activities are listed below.

Initial Response Activities

- Disseminating warning, emergency public information, and instructions to the citizens of Riverside County
- Coordinating evacuations and/or rescue operations
- Coordinating the care of displaced persons and treating the injured
- Clearing priority transportation routes
- Repairing critical facilities and structures
- Conducting initial damage assessments and surveys

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- Assessing the need for mutual aid assistance
- Coordinating the restriction of traffic/people movement and unnecessary access to affected areas
- Developing and implementing action plans
- Making all necessary notifications, including County Departments and personnel, the Riverside County Operational Area member jurisdictions, and the State OES.

Extended Response Activities

- Preparing detailed damage assessments
- Coordinating the operation of mass care facilities
- Coordinating coroner operations
- Procuring required resources to sustain operations
- Documenting situation status
- Protecting, controlling, and allocating vital resources
- Coordinating restoration of vital utility services
- Tracking resource allocation
- Conducting advanced planning activities
- Documenting expenditures
- Developing and implementing Action Plans for extended operations
- Disseminating emergency public information
- Declaring a local emergency
- Coordinating with state and federal agencies.

Recovery phase involves the restoration of services to the public and returning the affected area(s) to pre-emergency conditions. Recovery activities may be short term and long term, ranging from restoration of essential utilities, such as water and power, to mitigation measures designed to prevent future occurrences of a given threat. Mitigation phase occurs both before and after emergencies or disasters, where postdisaster mitigation is actually part of the recovery process.

The Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) also establishes the framework for implementation of the California Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) for Riverside County, which is in Mutual Aid Region VI, as defined by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. By extension, the plan also implements the National Incident Management System to facilitate multi-agency and -jurisdictional coordination in emergency operations, particularly between Riverside County and local governments, including special districts and state agencies. SEMS intends to reduce potential impacts of development on emergency response and evacuation plans by coordinating agencies within the emergency management community through one system accessible to jurisdictions statewide. The County of Riverside also has mutual aid

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agreements with local jurisdictions (24 cities) and a number of special districts and other governmental entities (e.g., school districts, water districts, Soboba Indian tribe).

City of Wildomar Municipal Code Chapter 8.28, Fire Code

The city's fire code also adopts and amends the CFC, where necessary.

5.6.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Project Site is vacant, with no above-grade structures, and covered by natural plant communities. The Project Site contains Rattlesnake Hill to the north and a natural drainage area on the east. A review of an Environmental Data Resources radius map report has revealed that the Project Site and surrounding areas are not listed on any of the databases searched.

Wildfire Hazard

Fire protection service for Wildomar, including the Project Site, is provided by the RCFD. RCFD contracts with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for fire protection, and RCFD, in cooperation with CAL FIRE, provides fire and emergency services to unincorporated areas of Riverside County and 22 partner cities, including the City of Wildomar.

Much of Riverside County is considered to have a moderate to high potential for wildland fires according to CAL FIRE. The CAL FIRE Riverside Unit categorizes wildfire risk by vegetation type, moisture content, terrain, and topography, among other factors. The Project Site and land abutting the site to the south, west, and north are all designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones by CAL FIRE (CAL FIRE 2009). The region displays the classic fuel pattern of inland Riverside County—annual grasses and weeds predominant in the flatter areas, trending to brush, such as chamise, sage, buckwheat, and similar sage scrub species, in the less disturbed areas and hills. In the higher hills, the brush tends toward chaparral species (Riverside 2014).

The Project Site gently slopes down from the north to the south and is lower in elevation along the western edge of the site. Rattlesnake Hill to the north is some two hundred feet in elevation above the rest of the Project Site. The project area is characterized as WUI, with undeveloped natural open space areas in close proximity to residential homes and roadways.

5.6.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- H-1 Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.
- H-2 Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

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- H-3 Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substance, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.
- H-4 Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.
- H-5 For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area.
- H-6 For a project in the vicinity of a private airstrip, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area.
- H-7 Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
- H-8 Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to the urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.

The Initial Study, included as Appendix A, substantiates that impacts associated with the following thresholds would be less than significant:

- Threshold H-1: Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.
- Threshold H-2: Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.
- Threshold H-3: Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substance, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.
- Threshold H-4: Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.
- Threshold H-5: For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area.
- Threshold H-6: For a project in the vicinity of a private airstrip, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area.

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These impacts will not be addressed in the following analysis.

5.6.3 Plans, Programs, and Policies

Regulatory Requirements (RR)

RR HAZ-1 The Proposed Project will be designed and constructed in accordance with the California Fire Code, as referenced in the City of Wildomar Municipal Code Chapter 8.28.

Project Design Features (PDF)

PDF HAZ-1 The Contractor's Specifications will require that the Proposed Project be designed and constructed to reduce safety provisions contained in the following ordinances and guidelines:

- Riverside County Fire Ordinance No. 787
- Riverside County Ordinance No. 695: Hazardous Vegetation
- Public Resources Code, Sections 4290-4299: Minimum statewide fire safety provisions.

PDF BIO-1 The following best management practices will be implemented:

- Prior to any clearing, grubbing, or grading permit for the project, a qualified biologist (Project Biologist) with a minimum of 3 years of experience in field supervision on construction sites, shall be retained by the applicant to oversee compliance with the protection and avoidance measures for biological issues associated with the project. The Project Biologist shall have the authority to halt construction activities in the event of noncompliance.
- The Project Biologist shall be onsite during initial ground disturbing activities, including, but not limited to: vegetation removal, tree removal or trimming, grading, and restoration landscaping to ensure project activities remain in compliance with all applicable biological resource permits.
- Intentional killing or unauthorized collection of plant and wildlife species shall be prohibited.
- Workers shall be prohibited from bringing pets and firearms to the Project Site, and from feeding wildlife.
- Undeveloped areas shall be protected in place by the installation of orange silt fencing. Fencing shall be maintained in working order and inspected weekly. Fencing repair shall occur within 2 working days following inspection.

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- All trash and food items shall be contained in closed containers and trash removed daily to reduce the attractiveness to opportunistic predators such as common ravens and feral cats and dogs.
- All fueling of construction vehicles shall be within designated areas beyond 100 feet of any drainage course, and be contained using appropriate protection measures.
- Nighttime construction shall be prohibited in areas directly abutting or within 200 feet of natural areas to be preserved. Nighttime construction which does occur outside these areas shall use directional lighting to minimize the impacts of increased artificial nighttime lighting.
- All construction equipment and vehicles shall not idle for more than 45 minutes to minimize ambient noise produced by the project.

5.6.4 Environmental Impacts

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.6-1: Project development would not affect the implementation of an emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. [Threshold H-7]

Impact Analysis: Implementation of the Proposed Project would not conflict with the County of Riverside Emergency Operation Plan (EOP), which implements California Standardized Emergency Management System. The EOP manages relatively minor incidents to large-scale emergencies in four phases: preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The Proposed Project would not involve any offsite roadway improvements that would adversely affect implementation of the county EOP.

The preparedness phase involves activities that are undertaken in advance of an emergency or disaster. These activities develop operational capabilities and effective responses to a disaster and might include mitigation activities, emergency/disaster planning, training and exercises, and public education. The Proposed Project would provide adequate emergency vehicle access, reviewed and approved by RCFD, as well as evacuation training and public education on emergencies and disasters. Moreover, the Proposed Project does not involve any activities that could conflict with the county's efforts to provide initial and extended emergency response activities identified under the county EOP.

Additionally, the Project Site has three street frontages that provide adequate emergency access to and from the site. No offsite roadways would be changed in a way that would result in adverse impacts to the existing evacuation plan for the county. Additionally, Public Resources Code Sections 4290-4299 and Government Code Section 51178 require minimum statewide fire safety standards pertaining to roads for fire equipment access; signage identifying streets, roads, and buildings; minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use; and fire fuel breaks and greenbelts. The required compliance with the existing plans and regulations would ensure that adequate emergency access is provided for emergency responders and safe evacuation

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routes for the school population. The Proposed Project would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Impacts would not be significant and no mitigation measures are necessary.

Level of Significance before Mitigation: Based on the analysis above and upon implementation of regulatory requirement RR HAZ-1, and project design feature PDF HAZ-1, Impact 5.6-2 would be less than significant without mitigation.

Impact 5.6-2: The Project Site is within a designated high fire hazard area and could expose structures and/or residences to wildfire danger. [Threshold H-8]

Impact Analysis: The Project Site is in a high fire hazard area designated by the Riverside County General Plan. It contains undeveloped plant communities/wildland and is adjacent to open space/wildland area to the north, although some urbanization has also occurred in the area. Development of the Proposed Project would increase human encroachment and the area of Wildland-Urban Interface. However, the Proposed Project would be required to comply with fire safety regulations, including the Riverside County Ordinance No. 787; CFC (as amended and adopted by the County of Riverside); Riverside County Ordinance No. 695; and Chapter 8.28, Fire Code, of the City of Wildomar Municipal Code. Additionally, the Proposed Project will implement best management practice as stated in PDF BIO-1 to limit human interference adjacent to open space/wildland to reduce wildfire danger. The proposed development would be reviewed and approved by the RCFD and CAL FIRE, as appropriate, and improved with fire safety design features to ensure that impacts related to wildfire are reduced to a less than significant level. No mitigation measures are necessary.

Level of Significance before Mitigation: Based on the analysis above and upon implementation of regulatory requirements RR HAZ-1, and project design features PDF HAZ-1 and PDF BIO-1, Impact 5.6-2 would be less than significant without mitigation.

5.6.5 Cumulative Impacts

Impacts to hazards and hazardous materials are specific to the conditions on a particular Project Site. Mitigation of fire hazard and evacuation plan impacts of development projects would also be specific to each site. Compliance with modern building standards, such as the CBC, reduces hazards-related risks. Implementation of RR HAZ-1, PDF HAZ_2, and PDF BIO-1 would reduce impact related to emergency response plan and wildfire to a less than significant level. As no individually significant impacts related hazards has been identified, no adverse cumulative impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials are anticipated.

5.6.6 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements RR HAZ-1, and project design features PDF HAZ-1 and PDF BIO-1, the following impacts would be less than significant:

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- **Impact 5.6-1:** Project development would not affect the implementation of an emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.
- **Impact 5.6-2:** The Project Site is within a designated high fire hazard area and could expose structures and/or residences to wildfire danger

5.6.7 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are necessary.

5.6.8 Level of Significance After Mitigation

The existing regulatory requirements and project design features would reduce potential impacts associated with hazards and hazardous materials to less than significant. Therefore, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts relating to hazards have been identified.

5.6.9 References

California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE). 2009, December 21. Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones: Wildomar.

http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fhsz_maps/FHSZ/riverside/Wildomar.pdf.

Riverside County. 2006, February. Riverside County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

http://www.rvcfire.org/ourDepartment/OES/Documents/Final_EOP_Part_1_Feb_2006.pdf.

———. 2014, March. County of Riverside General Plan Environmental Impact Report No. 521 (Public Review Draft).

http://planning.rctlma.org/Portals/0/genplan/general_plan_2014/EnvironmentalImpactReport/04-13_HazMatAndSafety_2014-04-07.pdf.

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