

F. AESTHETIC RESOURCES

This section was prepared by Robert Carr, a California licensed Landscape Architect and Visual Resource Specialist. This section assesses visual impacts that may result from implementation of the *Management Plan* and *Community Park Master Plan*. This analysis determines if a change in the visual environment would occur, whether that change would be perceived as a positive or negative one, and the degree of any change relative to the existing setting. The focus of the Aesthetic Resources section is on the potential for the proposed project components to result in impacts to sensitive visual resources primarily as seen from public roadways and recreation areas.

1. REGULATORY SETTING

The proposed project is located within the jurisdiction of the County of San Luis Obispo. The regulatory setting pertaining to visual resources includes review of the proposed development's consistency with various elements of the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan and the County of San Luis Obispo Zoning Ordinance, in addition to the review of findings made in this document per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) *Guidelines*.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site is located on approximately 440 acres of mostly undeveloped land in the unincorporated community of Cambria, in the County of San Luis Obispo. The site is surrounded on three sides by residential and commercial areas, and the Pacific Ocean on the fourth. The east and west portions of the FRP are separated by the Highway 1 corridor in a generally north-south orientation. The FRP includes a wide diversity of topography and vegetative communities. The overall site extends from the Pacific Ocean up and over a generally north-south oriented ridge and back down to Santa Rosa Creek and the downtown area of Cambria.

a. WEST FRP – SITE CONDITIONS

The western portion of the FRP consists of 364 acres of gentle to moderately steep slopes rising up from the coastal bluff terrace. The West FRP site reaches an elevation of approximately 260 feet above sea level before the landform drops off steeply to the Highway 1 corridor to the east. The vegetation of the West FRP includes the grasslands of the marine terrace, seasonal wetlands along the drainages, and the Monterey Pine mixed forest along the ridgetop and highway corridor.

Several hiking trails currently exist within the West FRP. With the exception of the Bluff Trail and the Marine Terrace Trail, these trails are all natural surfaces, with no formal improvements such as railing or signage (refer to Figures V-9 and V-10). A few handmade wooden benches are found alongside the trails. Post and wire fencing extends through a portion of the site, separating the Bluff Trail area from the Marine Terrace Trail area and higher elevations to the east. The Bluff Trail and Marine Terrace Trail are the most used and the most improved. Raised wooden walkways and pedestrian bridges are found along the southern portion of the Bluff Trail. Signage and trash receptacles are located at the north and south ends of the coastal bluff trail where it connects to the adjacent residential neighborhoods (refer to Figures V-11 and V-12).

The West FRP site is bounded to the north and south by residential areas. Both the Park Hill neighborhood to the north and the West Lodge Hill neighborhood to the south consist of single family houses on medium density lots. These neighborhood streets are paved and the properties are generally well landscaped. Access to the West FRP is primarily from Park Hill and West Lodge Hill via Windsor Boulevard.

b. WEST FRP - PROJECT VISIBILITY

The varied topography, vegetative patterns and undeveloped character of the West FRP provide a high quality visual backdrop for the community of Cambria and the Highway 1 corridor. Because of the FRP's central location, it has the potential to be seen from many locations; however, the greatest amount of visual exposure to the West FRP (although it is limited) is from Highway 1, West Lodge Hill, and Park Hill residential areas.

1) West FRP – Views From Highway 1

From both north and southbound Highway 1 travel lanes, the steep vegetated slopes of the FRP rising up to the west of the roadside are highly visible (refer to Figure V-13). Highway 1 fronts the West FRP for a distance of approximately 0.7 mile. From the roadway perspective, visibility to the upper portions of these slopes is somewhat limited because of the inclined viewing angle. None of the western-most portion of the West FRP or the Pacific Ocean can be seen from the highway vantage points within the FRP. Project elements within the West FRP that would have the most potential for visibility from Highway 1 would include any future pedestrian crossing of the highway, staging and parking areas along the highway, and associated signage and fencing. The Creek to Ridge Trail that traverses the West FRP hillside through the highway corridor would also have the potential for visibility, although much of those views would be screened or filtered by existing vegetation.

2) West FRP – Views From the West Lodge Hill and Park Hill residential areas

The West Lodge Hill and Park Hill residential areas have views of much of the site, from the West FRP ridge down to the ocean bluff (refer to Figure V-14). Within West Lodge Hill, Windsor Boulevard, Marlborough Lane, Victoria Way and Tipton Street dead-end at the FRP property. Currently Windsor Boulevard is the main public access point to the FRP from the north and south. Views to the FRP from these neighborhoods can include visibility of FRP users' cars parked on local streets and future parking areas, particularly during the summer and on weekends. Project features that would have the greatest potential to be noticeable from these residential areas and streets include the existing Bluff Trail and Marine Terrace Trail, Victoria Lane Trail, and Forest Loop Trail connections to Windsor Boulevard, Marlborough Lane, Victoria Way, Tipton Street, and Trenton Avenue. These improvements could include earthwork, path and road surfacing, small retaining structures, fencing, bollards and stiles, information kiosks and signage (refer to Figure V-15).

Several of the proposed trails within the West FRP would be visible from the West Lodge Hill and Park Hill residential areas. The extent of trail visibility would be dependent on the specific vantage point. From West Lodge Hill, the trails with the most visibility potential are the Marine Terrace Trail, the Bluff Trail, and the proposed Southside Link Trail and Victoria Lane Trail. The dense trees of the southeast portion of the West FRP would generally limit views of the trail system within that area.



West FRP Forest Loop Trail Area
FIGURE V-9



West FRP Bluff Trail Looking North
FIGURE V-10

Back of Figures V-9 and V-10



West FRP Bluff Trail at Windsor Boulevard South
FIGURE V-11



West FRP Bluff Trail at Windsor Boulevard North, West Lodge Hill Neighborhood
FIGURE V-12

Back of Figures V-11 and V-12

From the Park Hill neighborhood, the most visible segments of the trail system are the Marine Terrace Trail, the Bluff Trail, the Ridge Trail, and the Wallbridge to Ridge Trail. Most of the trails east of the Ridge Trail would not be visible from the Park Hill area.

3) West FRP – Views From within the West FRP

The West FRP currently supports a network of formal and informal hiking trails. The Bluff Trail and Marine Terrace Trail are the most used and as a result afford the greatest amount of public visual access to the site. From along the Bluff Trail, most all of the proposed trail system west of the ridge would be visible to some extent. Obviously, users of the trails throughout the West FRP would be able to see a greater level of project detail, including surfacing and textures, and construction materials. Views outward from the West FRP include vistas of the coastline and Pacific Ocean (refer to Figure V-16), Santa Lucia Mountain Range, and adjacent neighborhoods.

4) West FRP – Views From the Pacific Ocean

Although the number of potential viewers would be comparatively few, unobstructed views to the West FRP would be available from the Pacific Ocean. As seen from the ocean, all of the trails west of the Ridge Trail would be potentially visible, with the exception of the Forest Loop Trail where it would be hidden by trees. Because of the available viewing distance and general openness of the site, views from the ocean would be more comprehensive, with visibility of almost the complete trail system west of the ridge. From these more distant viewpoints, the colors and forms of the project elements would be the most identifiable visual characteristics.

c. EAST FRP – SITE CONDITIONS

The East FRP is seventy acres in size and extends from Highway 1 toward the east and the commercial center of Cambria. The Santa Rosa Creek corridor runs along the northern boundary of the site and includes riparian growth of willows, sycamore, alder and oak. The lower elevations of the East FRP site generally parallel Santa Rosa Creek and comprise the area created by the creek's floodplain. South of the floodplain, the East FRP site rises to a steep coastal scrub and forested hillside reaching an elevation of approximately 170 feet. Along the Highway 1 corridor, the vegetation of the East FRP includes stands of mature eucalyptus, grassland, and the riparian plants of Santa Rosa Creek (refer to Figure V-17).

The flatter area of the East FRP adjacent to the creek was used for grazing and pasture land. Existing development on the East FRP site includes an older residence adjacent to a wooden corral. A few residences are on the adjacent hillside to the south. Across the creek to the north is the east village commercial area of Cambria. The east village has a visual character defined somewhat by "quaint" smaller-scale buildings with wooden, ranch or farm style architecture. A weathered steel bridge over Santa Rosa Creek provides pedestrian and bicycle access between the East FRP and East Village. The CCSD water works facility is adjacent to the site along its northeastern edge. The water works is characterized by single-story office buildings, storage areas and equipment, and perimeter fencing. Along the highway frontage an old wooden billboard mostly obscured by trees welcomes travelers to the Village of Cambria.

1) East FRP – Project Visibility

The greatest amount of public exposure to the East FRP would be from Highway 1, Main Street, and the East Lodge Hill and Pines Knolls Estates areas. Rodeo Grounds Drive would also have views of the project improvements. The easternmost portion of the East FRP would be generally less exposed to off-site views because of its lower elevation and perimeter screening vegetation. The western portion of the East FRP would be more visible to the public because of its location along the Highway 1 corridor and proximity to Main Street. Where visible, the East FRP presents a high quality view. The open space of the site contributes to a pastoral visual character and helps define Cambria as a rural community.

2) East FRP – Views From Highway 1

The East FRP fronts Highway 1 for approximately 0.6 mile. As seen from the highway, the East FRP provides the fore and mid-ground visual context for the downtown Cambria area to the east (refer to Figure V-18). Because of the viewing distance and extent of intervening vegetation, the eastern portion of the East FRP where the Community Park is proposed would have reduced visibility from Highway 1. From the highway the most visible project elements of the East FRP would be the future Highway 1 pedestrian crossing, the Santa Rosa Creek (East) Trail and the Ramsey Trail.

3) East FRP – Views From Main Street

Along most of Main Street through the East Village, views to the East FRP would be screened by the riparian vegetation along Santa Rosa Creek and by the existing businesses along the south side of Main Street (refer to Figure V-19). Where the East FRP crosses to the north side of Santa Rosa Creek near Mid-State Bank, project elements such as the Santa Rosa Creek (East) Trail would be visible from Main Street. The existing pedestrian bridge over Santa Rosa Creek near Bluebird Lane connects to Main Street and would create one of the main visual access points to the East FRP property (refer to Figure V-20).

4) East FRP – Views From Rodeo Grounds Drive

Rodeo Grounds Drive is the primary existing road providing vehicle access to the East FRP. If the proposed community park is implemented, Rodeo Grounds Drive would continue as the principal road into the site and would offer the most direct views of the facilities. Proposed project features such as restroom and maintenance buildings, portable backstops and tall fencing, signage and paved areas would be the most noticeable elements as seen from Rodeo Grounds Drive. The view from Rodeo Grounds Drive would undergo substantial change upon relocation of the water works facility. The water yard area will be restored with riparian vegetation. Removal of isolated eucalyptus between the multi-purpose field and picnic area may be noticed but once the area is landscaped and more suitable trees are planted, their absence would go unnoticed.



**View of the West FRP from Southbound Highway 1
FIGURE V-13**



**View of the West FRP from the Park Hill Neighborhood
FIGURE V-14**

Back of Figures V-13 and V-14



**Bluff Trail and Marine Terrace Trail, Looking South
FIGURE V-15**



**Ocean view from the West FRP
FIGURE V-16**

Back of Figures V-15 and V-16

5) East FRP – Views From Tamson Street and the Pines Knolls Estates area

The Pines Knolls Estates area's elevated location provides broad views of downtown Cambria and the East FRP property to the south. Views from Tamson Street as well as from several residences along Grove Street would include much of the proposed community park (refer to Figure V-21). The green turf (artificial or natural) of the sports fields would be a noticeable visual element from this elevated vantage point. Security lighting on restroom structures, and potentially the community center would potentially be visible from this area. Because of the viewing distance, the trail system would be less visible in the landscape.

6) East FRP – Views From the East Lodge Hill Residential Area

The East Lodge Hill area is well-forested and as a result most of the views to the East FRP would be screened. However a few residences are visible on the hillside and would have views of the proposed community park area. In addition, the trail connections proposed from the FRP to Wilton Drive and Piney Way would add new visual features to the East Lodge Hill neighborhood (refer to Figure V-22).

7) East FRP – Views From within the East FRP

The East FRP is currently less utilized by the public than the West FRP. From within the East FRP property, views outward are generally defined by foreground pasture and open space with a backdrop of wooded slopes and ridges. Views are of somewhat higher quality at the eastern portion of the East FRP than they are through the more developed area between Main Street and Highway 1, looking towards development on Main Street. With implementation of the *Management Plan, Community Park Master Plan*, and future referenced projects, views within much of the East FRP would be directly affected by construction of the community park. Visibility of the future park would decrease as vantage points moved to the west, closer to the highway (refer to Figure III-3).

3. THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the County of San Luis Obispo.

In addition to comparing the project to relevant policies and standards, the aesthetic resources assessment identified which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view, and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis was combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities and viewing duration in order to determine the overall level of impacts. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

a. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT GUIDELINES

The significance of potential aesthetic resources impacts are based on thresholds identified within Appendix G of the CEQA *Guidelines*. According to the *Guidelines*, aesthetic impacts would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

A substantial adverse impact to a scenic vista would occur if the proposed project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, or in particular county or state-designated scenic roadways, or from other public areas. The degree of potential impact on scenic vistas varies with factors such as viewing distance, duration, viewer sensitivity, and the visual context of the surrounding area.

The aesthetics section analyzes the extent that the proposed development would alter the visual quality of the project site and its surroundings. The specific characteristics that define important vistas are identified, and the project's effect on those characteristics is assessed. If the fundamental quality of the vistas are substantially reduced, significant impacts would result.

County planning documents and regulations do not by themselves set a specific threshold regarding the degradation of a scenic vista or visual resources. However review of applicable planning document language indicates that among other features, views of the coast and shoreline, hillsides, ridgelines, and substantial stands of native vegetation are among the resources considered aesthetically important.

Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

Highway 1, which bisects the project site is an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway. Per CEQA *Guidelines*, any project action within view of Highway 1 that would have a substantial adverse affect on a unique or outstanding visual resource would be considered a significant impact. Outstanding visual resources might include memorable stands of mature vegetation, framed views of pastoral open space, unique rock formations, or other exceptional aesthetic features.

Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Project related actions would be considered to have a significant impact on the visual character of the site if they altered the area in a way that significantly changed, detracted from, or degraded the visual quality of the site and was inconsistent with community policies regarding visual character. The degree to which that change reflects documented community values and meets viewers' aesthetic expectations is the basis for determining levels of significance. Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact that the project may have on the visual quality of the site. If a strong contrast occurred where project features or activities attract attention and dominate the landscape setting, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of the site.

Project components that are not subordinate to the landscape setting could result in a significant change in the composition of the landscape. Consideration of potential significance includes analysis of visual character elements such as land use and intensity, visual integrity of the landscape type, and other factors.



From the East FRP Looking West Toward Highway 1
FIGURE V-17



View of the East FRP from Highway 1
FIGURE V-18

Back of Figures V-17 and V-18



**View of the East FRP from Main Street
FIGURE V-19**



**View of the East FRP from the Existing Pedestrian Bridge over Santa Rosa Creek
FIGURE V-20**

Back of Figures V-19 and V-20

Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjected viewers from public roads to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visibility at night, or if the collective lumination of the project resulted in a noticeable spill-over effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements, atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. The degree of impact caused by night lighting would consider the type of lighting proposed by the project along with the lighting reasonably expected to be generated by future users of the property.

b. CONSISTENCY WITH THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT

The California Coastal Act, §30251 states that: The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

c. CONSISTENCY WITH COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO PLANS AND POLICIES

County of San Luis Obispo planning documents do not contain specific criteria for determining thresholds of significance regarding aesthetic resources. However, in comparing the project to the above CEQA *Guidelines* thresholds, substantial consideration was given to the project's consistency with public policies, plans, goals, and regulations concerning scenic vistas, scenic roadways, visual character, and night lighting. The following goals, policies and guidelines provide a basis for determining levels of potential impact as well as an indication of aesthetic values and sensitivity to visual change.

1) County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Agriculture and Open Space Element

The western portion of the West FRP is located within a designated Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) for scenic qualities per the County of San Luis Obispo General Plan, Agriculture and Open Space Element, Open Space Resources map. The project site area is located within SRA S1, "Ocean Shoreline."

Open Space Goal (OSG1) states as an objective to "Identify, protect, sustain, and where necessary restore and reclaim areas with (scenic) characteristics."

Open Space Policy (OSP24) states that Highway 1 is eligible for further study regarding county Scenic Corridor designation, based on preliminary assessment of its visual quality. This policy specifies the protection of scenic vistas and states the following regarding the development of lands within scenic corridors:

- a. Locate structures, roads, and grading on portions of a site that minimize visual impact.
- b. Locate structures below prominent ridgelines and hilltops so they are not silhouetted against the sky.
- c. Use natural landforms and vegetation to screen development. Where that cannot be done, it is preferred to screen development with native vegetation that is compatible with the scenic resource being protected and does not obstruct public vistas.
- d. Design structures with colors that are taken from the natural landscape.
- e. Minimize the visibility of utilities from public view corridors and place them underground where feasible.

Open Space Policy (OSP26) *Recreational Uses of Publicly-Owned Open Space* states that: Park sites and recreation areas shall protect scenic and environmentally sensitive resources.

2) County of San Luis Obispo Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance

The Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO) defines the purpose of the SRA such that proposed uses be designed with consideration of the identified resources, and the need for their protection. The ordinance further states that the environmental determination is to evaluate the potential effect of the proposed project upon the particular features of the site or vicinity that are identified by the Land Use Element as the reason for the sensitive resource designation.

3) County of San Luis Obispo Land Use Element, Local Coastal Program, Coastal Plan Policies

Chapter 10, *Visual and Scenic Resources* states that: The coastal area of San Luis Obispo County includes a variety of superb scenery. The economic stability of the recreation and tourist industries are highly dependent on the quality of the scenic coastal areas accessible and attractive to the general public. Therefore, the identification and protection of visual resources within the coastal zone is a critical aspect of planning for long-term change and development within highly scenic coastal regions.

California Coastal Act, §30251 states: The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

4) County of San Luis Obispo General Plan Land Use Element and Local Coastal Plan- North Coast Planning Area

Chapter 6, Land Use - Recreation states that: All the undeveloped shoreline of the planning area is classified as Sensitive Resource Area. Areas of unique environmental interest should be preserved in their natural state with managed public access and recreation use limited to nature trails with interpretive signs.

Chapter 6 Land Use - Cambria Urban Area states that regarding recreation uses, "Emphasis is on development of selected uses essential to the area and harmonizing with the scenic setting".

5) County of San Luis Obispo Cambria-and San Simeon Acres Community Plans

Chapter 1 - §18 *Vision for East/ West Ranch* includes the following objectives:

- A. Strive for minimum disturbance to the natural qualities of the FRP while allowing the appropriate public access and recreation.
- H. Site and design all improvements in ways that protect sensitive habitats and the scenic and visual quality of the FRP.

Chapter 4 - §6 Land Use - *Site Design Development within View of Highway One*. New development shall be screened from Highway One in accordance with the criteria below.

- A. **Landform alterations.** Landform alterations (such as road grading, earthmoving, and vegetation removal) shall be minimized. Where no feasible alternative exists, site disturbance shall be limited to areas that are least visible from Highway One.
- B. **Location of buildings.** Buildings and parking areas shall utilize appropriate landscaping (including native vegetation where feasible) to minimize views from Highway One.
- C. **Vegetative screening.** Vegetation which is used to screen landform alterations, buildings, or parking areas shall be maintained on a long-term basis.
- D. **Night lighting.** Night Lighting shall be the minimum necessary for convenience and security, and shall be shielded in order to minimize pollution of night skies. Lighting shall not conflict with the character of the area.
- E. **Colors and materials.** Appropriate colors and materials shall be used to minimize structure visibility from Highway One. Examples of the palette of colors and materials shall be provided with each application for development.

6) The County of San Luis Obispo Design Guidelines

This document prepared by the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building consists of “design objectives, guidelines and examples that will help retain and enhance the unique character of the unincorporated communities and rural areas of San Luis Obispo County”. The following design objectives apply to the project site:

- RC-7a.** Where possible, large cuts and graded pads should be avoided to minimize the alteration of natural contours.
- RC-7e.** Artificial slopes that are visible to the public should match the natural contours in the immediate vicinity.

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND METHODOLOGY

The findings of this study are based on field visits conducted over several days, including review of the entire site as well as the surrounding streets and neighborhoods. Resource inventories were conducted both on foot and from moving vehicles. The existing developed features of the FRP were surveyed along with the natural areas. The complete extent of potential visibility of *Master Plan* elements and programs were defined, with particular attention given to public roadways and nearby residences. Existing visual resources and site conditions were photographed and recorded on aerial maps and field notes. County planning documents and previous environmental studies relevant to the FRP were referred to for gaining an understanding of community aesthetic values.

5. WEST FRP - IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

a. WEST FRP – WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES

If not sited and designed properly, wireless telecommunication facilities and related cell towers would be highly visible and would reduce the visual quality of the FRP and the community in general. Because of the communication objective of placing cell towers at higher elevations and in plain sight, a high probability would exist that the facilities would be a noticeable visual element in the landscape. The *Management Plan* requires that "Cell towers must be located and designed to have little to no visual impacts on the natural features of the FRP." This requirement would be assured by a comprehensive visual assessment of any proposed cell tower facility prior to its implementation. An application for a telecommunications facility is currently under consideration by the County of San Luis Obispo. A project-specific visual impact assessment was prepared for the project.

AES Impact 1 **Visibility of wireless telecommunication facilities could result in highly noticeable built elements contrasting with the natural setting of the FRP, community and Highway 1 corridor and could substantially degrade visual quality, resulting in a potentially significant impact.**

AES/mm-1 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County for wireless telecommunication facilities, the CCSD or its designee shall provide a comprehensive visual impact assessment to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

b. WEST FRP - PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE OVER HIGHWAY 1

The construction of a pedestrian bridge over Highway 1 could be a significant visual element in the highway corridor and for the community of Cambria. A pedestrian bridge would be the first of its kind over Highway 1 in San Luis Obispo County. Without sensitive siting and design, a new bridge over the highway could result in substantial visual impacts to the community setting and the character of this State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway.

The County of San Luis Obispo *Coastal Policies* recommend the use of an Architectural Review Process where a unique community character is identified. As defined by the *Coastal Policies*,

this board is often comprised of architects, planners, builders and interested citizens from the community and allows for local input on proposed buildings or uses. The architectural review board process requires consensus as to the appropriate design standards and the cooperation of the property owners within the area proposed for review. Based on the visual sensitivity of the Highway 1 corridor within the community of Cambria and along the North Coast, establishment of an architectural review board would be appropriate to determine the design of the pedestrian bridge.

AES Impact 2 **Visibility of a pedestrian bridge over Highway 1 could result in highly noticeable built element contrasting with the natural setting of the Scenic Highway, the FRP, and the community of Cambria and could substantially degrade visual quality, resulting in a potentially significant impact.**

AES/mm-2 Upon preparation of plans for the pedestrian bridge, and prior to application for land use and construction permits from the County and an encroachment permit from Caltrans, the CCSD or its designee shall develop an architectural review board to design the pedestrian bridge. The board shall consist of architects, planners, builders and interested citizens from the community.

AES/mm-3 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County for the pedestrian bridge over Highway 1, the CCSD or its designee shall provide plans for the bridge to the California Department of Transportation and the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. Proposed plans shall include the following elements:

- a. The pedestrian bridge shall be designed to be subordinate to, and blend with, the rural character of the area.
- b. Where feasible, portions of the bridge shall be screened utilizing native vegetation, however, such vegetation, when mature, must also be selected and sited in such a manner as to not obstruct major public views.
- c. The location and design of the bridge shall minimize the need for tree removal, and if trees are required to be removed, the site shall be replanted with similar species or other species which are reflective of the community character.
- d. Colors and materials shall be selected to blend into the surrounding landscape, and shall also comply with California Department of Transportation requirements.

AES/mm-4 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County for the pedestrian bridge over Highway 1, the CCSD or its designee shall provide a comprehensive visual impact assessment to the California Department of Transportation and the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

c. **WEST FRP -TRAIL AND ROAD DESIGN STANDARDS**

The proposed trail system will be seen throughout the FRP (refer to Figure V-23). The extent to which these trails visually blend with the surroundings or appear as scars on the landscape depends to a large degree on their color and form. Earthwork and imported surface and embankment materials that do not match the appearance of the adjacent landcover could visually contrast and be noticeable from great distances. Trail and access road structures such as boardwalks, railing, ramps, landings and retaining structures have the potential to draw attention to the trail facility and look out of character with the natural setting.

AES Impact 3 Trails and access roads that visually contrast with the surrounding landscape could be seen from great distances as scars on the land and could adversely affect the natural visual setting of the FRP and coastline, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

AES/mm-5 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County, and prior to site disturbance, proposed trail and road design plans shall include the following standards and concepts:

- a. All boardwalks, bridges, retaining structures, edge stops, railing and other visible features shall be made of natural or natural appearing materials that have low reflective qualities and do not visually contrast with the natural colors of the adjacent landcover.
- b. All path and access road surfaces, including emergency and maintenance vehicle roads shall match the color of the adjacent native earth. Decomposed granite and polymer surfaces, "all-weather surfaces," American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant stable surfaces, and compacted imported earth surfaces shall be designed and constructed to match the color of the adjacent soil. This requirement shall also apply to all road-related culverts, rock slope protection, and drainage systems.
- c. All trail and road design shall minimize grading by following the natural contours of the land as much as possible. Where grading is unavoidable, all slopes shall include slope-rounding to reduce the engineered appearance of the earthwork.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.



**View of the East FRP in the Background from Tamson Drive
FIGURE V-21**



**View of East FRP Looking North
FIGURE V-22**

Back of Figures V-21 and V-22

d. **WEST FRP - SIGNAGE**

The extensive system of trails, access points, safety and interpretive information proposed for the FRP may require dozens of new signs and markers throughout the site. The *Management Plan* requires that signs are constructed of natural or recycled materials. Recycled materials may or may not look natural. The placement of signs could block views of the Pacific Ocean or other scenic resources. Signage at parking and staging areas would contribute to visual clutter in the landscape and in residential neighborhoods.

AES Impact 4 Signage required for proposed trails, parking and staging, interpretive, safety and other purposes could block scenic views and create visual clutter on the FRP, the Highway 1 corridor and the community of Cambria, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

AES/mm-6 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County, and prior to site disturbance, a signage plan shall be prepared, and shall include the following standards and concepts:

- a. All signs shall be made of natural or natural appearing materials that have low reflective qualities and do not visually contrast with the natural colors of the adjacent landcover. Exceptions shall be made in keeping with applicable ADA and safety standards.
- b. All signs shall be the minimum size necessary for their intended purpose, in keeping with applicable ADA and safety standards.
- c. All signs shall be placed in the least visually obtrusive location possible consistent with their intended purpose, without blocking views of the Pacific Ocean or other scenic resources, and in keeping with applicable ADA and safety standards.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

e. **WEST FRP – MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES**

On-going maintenance activities could alter the intended aesthetic of the FRP defined in the *Management Plan*. Maintenance staff and volunteers may not be aware of the goals and requirements set forth in the Plan. As a result, subsequent actions by ranch maintenance personnel could result in adverse visual impacts to the setting.

AES Impact 5 Maintenance activities inconsistent with the aesthetic goals of the *Public Access and Management Plan* could result in adverse visual impacts.

AES/mm-7 All maintenance work within the FRP shall comply with the visual appearance requirements of the various sections of the *Public Access and Management Plan*. Special attention shall be given to paint and finish colors, imported fill and surfacing materials, replacement plants, and soil disturbance.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

f. WEST FRP - PHASED IMPROVEMENTS

The *Management Plan* includes several proposed improvements that could require screening to avoid visual impacts. Such improvements may include parking lots and staging areas, trash containers, and utility, equipment and maintenance buildings. Where possible, establishing screen planting prior to the construction of the related improvement would allow the avoidance of impacts, both long and short-term.

AES Impact 6 Screen planting installed at the time of the related plan improvement could result in significant short term visual impacts due to the time required for planting to mature and become effective.

AES/mm-8 Upon implementation of the *Public Access and Management Plan*, short-term actions of phased improvements shall include the following concept:

- a. Install and maintain visual screen planting where feasible at areas identified in the *Management Plan* and subsequent visual assessments as areas likely to require screening in the future.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

g. WEST FRP – CENTRAL STAGING AREA AT CAMBRIA DRIVE ON HIGHWAY 1

The construction of a central staging area and parking lot adjacent to Highway 1 could be a substantial visual element in the highway corridor (refer to Figure V-24). As a transportation node, the staging area could reasonably include parked cars and busses, a sheltered bus stop, a kiosk, highway signage, trailhead signage, fencing, paved accessible parking and walkways, trash receptacles and other elements. Without sensitive siting and design, a central staging area adjacent to the highway could result in substantial visual impacts to the FRP, the community setting and the character of this State Scenic Highway and National Scenic Byway.

AES Impact 7 Visibility of a central staging area adjacent to Highway 1 could result in highly noticeable built elements and clutter contrasting with the natural setting of the Scenic Highway, the FRP, and the community of Cambria, and could substantially degrade visual quality, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

AES/mm-9 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County, and prior to site disturbance to establish the Highway 1 central staging area, the CCSD or its designee shall provide a comprehensive visual impact assessment to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval. This plan shall incorporate the following elements:

- a. Visual screening from Highway 1, location of any structures to minimize views from Highway 1.
- b. Shielded lighting (if lighting is proposed).
- c. Appropriate colors and materials consistent with the County of San Luis Obispo Community Plan, County Design Guidelines, and *Public Access and Management Plan*.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

h. WEST FRP - GULLY EROSION STABILIZATION

The Seaclift gully erosion location is identified in the *Management Plan*. Mechanical stabilization efforts to restore the site could include filling in the gully with various amounts of rock, earthen fill material and topsoil. The gully may also require engineered drainage culverts. Planting restoration would occur on the recontoured gully. Without careful attention to the brightness and color of the imported fill material and topsoil, the stabilization area could appear highly contrasting and result in adverse visual impacts until vegetation was successfully established.

AES Impact 8 **Visibility of a highly contrasting imported fill and topsoil material for gully stabilization could result in a noticeable earthwork operation, inconsistent with the natural setting of the FRP and coast, resulting in a potentially significant impact.**

AES/mm-10 During restoration activities associated with the Seaclift gully, all topsoil and fill material used for gully repair and exposed to view shall be similar in color and brightness to the soil of the adjacent native ground.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

6. **EAST FRP – IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

a. EAST FRP -TRAIL AND ROAD DESIGN STANDARDS

The proposed trail system will be seen throughout the East FRP. The extent to which these trails visually blend with the surroundings or appear as scars on the landscape depends to a large degree on their color and form. Earthwork and imported surface and embankment materials that do not match the appearance of the adjacent landcover could visually contrast and be noticeable from great distances. Trail and access road structures such as boardwalks, railing, ramps, landings and retaining structures have the potential to draw attention to the trail facility and look out of character with the natural setting.

AES Impact 9 **Trails and access roads that visually contrast with the surrounding landscape could be seen from great distances as scars on the land and could adversely affect the natural visual setting of the East FRP, resulting in a potentially significant impact.**

Implement AES/mm-5

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

b. **EAST FRP – TRAIL SIGNAGE**

The proposed system of trails, access points, safety and interpretive information on the East FRP may require new signs and markers throughout the site. The *Management Plan* requires that signs are constructed of natural or recycled materials. Recycled materials may or may not look natural. The placement of signs could block views of scenic resources, including grassland and the Santa Rosa Creek riparian corridor. Signage at parking and staging areas would contribute to visual clutter in the landscape and in residential neighborhoods.

AES Impact 10 Signage required for proposed trails, staging, interpretive, safety and other purposes could block scenic views and create visual clutter on the FRP, the Highway 1 corridor and the community of Cambria, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

Implement AES/mm-6

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

c. **EAST FRP – MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES**

On-going maintenance activities could alter the intended aesthetic of the FRP defined in the *Management Plan*. Maintenance staff and volunteers may not be aware of the goals and requirements set forth in the Plan. As a result, subsequent actions by ranch maintenance personnel could result in adverse visual impacts to the setting.

AES Impact 11 Maintenance activities inconsistent with the aesthetic goals of the *Public Access and Management Plan* could result in adverse visual impacts.

Implement AES/mm-7

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

d. **EAST FRP - PHASED IMPROVEMENTS**

The *Management Plan* includes several proposed improvements that could require screening to avoid visual impacts. Such improvements may include parking lots and staging areas, trash containers, and utility, equipment and maintenance buildings. Where possible, establishing screen planting prior to the construction of the related improvement would allow the avoidance of impacts, both long and short-term.

AES Impact 12 Screen planting installed at the time of the related plan improvement could result in significant short term visual impacts due to the time required for planting to mature and become effective.

Implement AES/mm-8

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

e. **EAST FRP - COMMUNITY PARK**

The *Management Plan* describes the future development of a community park on the eastern portion of the East FRP. The park would be developed in a separate action and as such the specific design and elements are not known at this time. Preliminary concepts of the park show sports fields, tennis courts, a community center, restrooms, a gazebo, group picnic areas, parking, maintenance buildings, trails and other amenities. Although no lighting plan or discussion is provided, it is reasonable to assume some lighting will be associated with the park. Preliminary review of the community park site and the surrounding area indicates that most of the park facilities would not be seen from off-site locations. Views from Highway 1 and from the downtown areas of Cambria would be limited due to intervening vegetation, viewing distance, or both. The park features that would have the greatest probability of being noticed from the surrounding area would be the roofs of the community center, restrooms, maintenance buildings, and other structures. The extent of visibility of these park features would depend mostly on their location, height and color. Night lighting on restrooms could also be a noticeable visual element from off-site viewing areas. Even if raised light standards were not proposed, the atmospheric glow from security and building lighting could be an adverse visual characteristic of the park development. From inside the East FRP, careful attention would need to be given to the architectural elements of structures and other features in order to appear consistent with the rural pastoral character of the community. A comprehensive visual assessment of proposed buildings and associated structural improvements would ensure the park avoids or minimizes impacts and complements the visual character of Cambria and the region.

AES Impact 13 Proposed structures and lighting of the future community park could result in development that would be out of character with the setting resulting in adverse visual impacts to the community.

AES/mm-11 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County for the community park, the CCSD or its designee shall provide a comprehensive visual impact assessment of proposed buildings and associated structural improvements to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

f. **EAST FRP - CCSD WATER WORKS FACILITY RELOCATION**

The *Management Plan* describes the desire to relocate the CCSD water works away from Santa Rosa Creek, and the County storage yard moved off the FRP property. The *Management Plan* suggests that both of these facilities be screened from public views from Rodeo Grounds Drive, the FRP area and the future park. This requirement would be assured by a preparation of a comprehensive visual assessment of any proposed relocations of the water works or maintenance facilities prior to their implementation.

AES Impact 14 Visibility of the relocated water works or County storage yard from Rodeo Grounds Drive or other public roads or areas could result in cluttered views incompatible with the adjacent community and future park, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

AES/mm-12 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County to relocate the CCSD water works or County storage yard, the CCSD or its designee shall submit design plans including, but not limited to, the following elements:

- a. The proposed design shall include elements consistent with the rural character of Cambria.
- b. Colors and materials shall consist of earthtone, muted colors consistent with surrounding natural vegetation.
- c. Landscape screening, consisting of native, drought-tolerant plant and shrub species, shall provide a minimum of 50 percent screening from the park area.
- d. Stored and stockpiled materials shall be shielded from view by solid fencing and/or vegetation, or the proposed structures.

AES/mm-13 Upon application for land use and construction permits from the County to relocate the CCSD water works or County storage yard, the CCSD or its designee shall provide a comprehensive Visual Impact Assessment to the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building for review and approval.

Residual Impact With implementation of mitigation, this impact would be considered *less than significant with mitigation, Class II*.

7. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The discussion of cumulative impacts relates to the potential for implementation of the Management Plan and Community Park Master Plan to contribute to an aggregate change in visual quality of the area. The Highway 1 corridor through the north coast of County of San Luis Obispo has undergone relatively few visual changes over the last several years. Commercial development has been occurring in the west and east villages of Cambria, and a few new motels have been built along Moonstone Beach Drive. To the south the newly constructed school on Main Street can be seen from the Highway 1 corridor.

The proposed project could introduce a variety of new visual elements into the public view. In general, the most potentially noticeable new elements would be the community park and the Highway 1 pedestrian bridge. Elements proposed on the West FRP would be visible to a lesser degree. Proposed improvements such as parking and staging areas, signage and information kiosks would contribute to a slightly more developed look from public viewing areas. Proposed improvements to the trail system such as grading and new surfaces would increase visibility of the trails and access roads.

The Management Plan satisfactorily addresses and resolves most of the potentially adverse aesthetic issues associated with its implementation. The mitigation measures identified in this aesthetic section further reduce potential visual impacts and noticeability of the project. The improvements, restorations, and actions specifically proposed with the Management Plan, in conjunction with these mitigation measures would not significantly alter the overall visual character of the FRP or its surroundings, and would not result in a substantial cumulative visual change. Subsequent required visual assessment of the future community park, the potential Highway 1 pedestrian bridge, and other referenced major project elements would help ensure those projects' consistency with coastal plan visual policies and protection of visual resources.

LIST OF ABBREVIATED TERMS

Abbreviation	Term
ADA	American Disabilities Act
CCSD	Cambria Community Services District
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CZLUO	Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
SRA	Sensitive Resource Area



Existing Bluff Trail Improvements
FIGURE V-23



Location of Proposed Central Staging Area West of Highway 1
FIGURE V-24

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