

1 **3.3 Environmental Checklist**

2 **3.3.1 Aesthetics**

I. AESTHETICS	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Would the Project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Would the Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3 **3.3.1.1 Environmental Setting**

4 **Onshore.** The onshore component of the Project is located within the DCPD facility on  
 5 Diablo Canyon Road. Connecting roads include Pecho Valley Road to the north and  
 6 Pecho Road to the south; Avila Beach Drive is at the southern end of the PG&E  
 7 property. Montaña de Oro State Park is located approximately 10.6 km (6.6 mi)  
 8 northwest of the onshore portion of the Project area. Montaña de Oro consists of 32 km<sup>2</sup>  
 9 (8,000 acres) of rugged cliffs, sandy beaches, coastal plains, streams, and gently rolling  
 10 hills including coastal scrub and dune landscapes. Montaña de Oro’s scenic views and  
 11 landscape are representative of the ecosystem surrounding DCPD. Visitors come to  
 12 Montaña de Oro to enjoy hiking trails, public access beaches, horseback riding,  
 13 camping and the scenic views of more than 161 km (100 mi) of coastline. One particular  
 14 trail from Coon Creek Point Buchon Trail, extends from Montaña de Oro State Park to  
 15 within DCPD’s easement where the trail ends approximately 2 km (1.25 mi) north of the  
 16 DCPD facility. An additional scenic hiking trail, Pecho Coast Trail, begins at Port San  
 17 Luis near the DCPD property line and concludes within PG&E’s easement  
 18 approximately 6.4 km (4.0 mi) southeast of the DCPD facility.

19 Views from both trails offer panoramic scenic ocean views. Whales, porpoises, sea lions  
 20 and other marine mammals are frequently observed from the shoreline, while rocky  
 21 areas and kelp beds are visible from the trails. Gray whales can be seen from  
 22 December to May, with the greatest number in January during their southward  
 23 migration. Additionally, views of humpback whales are not uncommon (Kevin Crouch,  
 24 Padre, pers. comm.).

1 **Offshore.** Offshore, views of the ocean and shoreline are generally similar to the views  
2 provided from the onshore trails describe above. Three of the four proposed temporary  
3 OBS units, long-term unit OBS-3, and a portion of the cable connecting three of the four  
4 long-term OBS units would be located within the Point Buchon MPA. This marine  
5 protection area offers visual resources that include whales, sea lions, sea otters, and  
6 other marine wildlife. Whale watching and scenic boat cruises frequent this area.

#### 7 3.3.1.2 Regulatory Setting

8 **Federal.** There are no federal regulations related to aesthetics relevant to the Project.

9 **State.** The **California Coastal Act** (Pub. Resources Code, § 30000 et seq.) was  
10 enacted in 1976 after state voters approved the Coastal Conservation Act (Proposition  
11 20) in 1972. A key factor that led to passage of the Coastal Act was the visible  
12 deterioration of the coastal environment associated with development pressures of a  
13 growing population. The Act establishes policies and guidelines that provide direction  
14 for the conservation and development of the California coastline, and also established  
15 the California Coastal Commission (CCC) as the state's coastal management,  
16 regulatory, and permitting agency for all development within the California coastal zone.  
17 This permitting and regulatory authority is further delegated to the local governments  
18 through the process of certified Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). For example, LCPs are  
19 developed by counties and municipalities for the portions of the coastal zone that are  
20 within their respective jurisdictions. Following certification of an LCP, regulatory  
21 (permitting) authority is delegated to the local jurisdiction, while the CCC retains  
22 jurisdiction over shoreline areas from the mean high tide line offshore to the 3 nm limit.

23 Under the Coastal Act, development in the coastal zone generally requires a Coastal  
24 Development Permit (CDP) from either the CCC or local jurisdiction with a certified LCP.  
25 In general, the CCC is responsible for determining a project's consistency with the  
26 Coastal Act and/or the California Coastal Management Program (CCMP), for granting  
27 CDPs for projects within the California coastal zone not covered by LCPs, and for  
28 certain appeals of local government coastal zone decisions.

29 Coastal Act Section 30251 is pertinent to visual resources preservation, stating: "*The  
30 scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a  
31 resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to  
32 protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, and, where feasible, to  
33 restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in  
34 highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation  
35 and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local  
36 government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.*"

37 Coastal Act Section 30253 states, in part, that new development shall "... *where  
38 appropriate, protect special communities and neighborhoods which, because of their  
39 unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreational uses.*"

1 **Local.** San Luis Obispo County (1988) has developed the **San Luis Obispo Land Use**  
2 **Element - LCP/Coastal Plan Policies.** As a result, the County has authority to issue  
3 CDPs for most development in the generally 915-m (3,050-ft) wide coastal zone. The  
4 San Luis Obispo County LCP contains several policies related to visual resources;  
5 policies applicable to the Project are summarized below.

- 6 • *Protection of Visual and Scenic Resources.* Unique and attractive features of the  
7 landscape, including but not limited to unusual landforms, scenic vistas and  
8 sensitive habitats are to be preserved, protected and, in visually degraded areas,  
9 restored where feasible.
- 10 • *Site Selection for New Development.* Permitted development should be sited so  
11 as to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Wherever  
12 possible, site selection for new development is to emphasize locations not visible  
13 from major public view corridors.
- 14 • *Landform Alterations.* Grading, earthmoving, major vegetation removal and other  
15 land alterations within public view corridors are to be minimized. Where feasible,  
16 contours of the finished surface are to blend with adjacent natural terrain to  
17 achieve a consistent grade and natural appearance.
- 18 • *Development on Beaches and Sand Dunes.* Prohibit new development on open  
19 sandy beaches, except facilities required for public health and safety. Require  
20 permitted development to minimize visibility and alterations to the natural  
21 landform and minimize removal of dune stabilizing vegetation.
- 22 • *Development on Coastal Bluffs.* New development on bluff faces shall be limited to  
23 public access stairways and shoreline protection structures. Permitted  
24 development shall be sited and designed to be compatible with the natural  
25 features of the landform as much as feasible. New development on bluff tops shall  
26 be designed and sited to minimize visual intrusion on adjacent sandy beaches.

27 3.3.1.3 Impact Analysis

28 **a) *Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?***

29 See response below.

30 **b) *Would the Project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but***  
31 ***not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a***  
32 ***state scenic highway?***

33 See response below.

34 **c) *Would the Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or***  
35 ***quality of the site and its surroundings?***

36 The onshore component of the Project would result in the extension of an existing 10.0  
37 cm (4.0 inch) diameter conduit across existing armor rock rip-rap into the DCCP intake

1 bay and is expected to take one day to complete. The visible portion of the new conduit  
2 would only be several meters in length. The onshore portion of the Project would not  
3 substantially alter any landforms, scenic vistas or sensitive habitat; would not be visible  
4 from a major public view corridor (residential areas, public lands or roads); would not  
5 result in grading, landform alterations, or vegetation removal; and would not result in  
6 development on a sandy beach or coastal bluff. Therefore, the onshore component of  
7 the Project would have no impact to scenic coastal resources.

8 The majority of the Project components (i.e., temporary and permanent OBS units and  
9 associated cables) would be located below the ocean surface and away from public  
10 views. During installation activities, one 30-m (100-foot) long vessel would be used for  
11 both OBS and cable deployment. A smaller boat may be used within the DCPD intake  
12 embayment to transport divers to help pull the cable through the proposed conduit.  
13 Views of the primary vessel would be possible from both onshore and offshore locations  
14 during the installation and recovery activities. Views of the vessel from onshore  
15 locations would be primarily limited to areas within the immediate vicinity of the DCPD,  
16 Montaña de Oro, and the trails described above. Offshore, commercial and recreational  
17 vessels would also have views of the Project vessels during installation and recovery  
18 activities. The short-term use of a vessel as seen from the shoreline or from commercial  
19 or recreational vessels would not result in views that are out of character with  
20 surrounding visual conditions, or result in significant changes to existing visual  
21 conditions as seen from viewpoints provided in the Project area.

22 **d) Would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which**  
23 **would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?**

24 All proposed equipment installation and recovery operations would occur during daytime  
25 hours, and the Project would not result in a short-term increase in offshore nighttime  
26 lighting. Therefore, the Project would have no lighting-related impacts.

27 3.3.1.4 Mitigation and Residual Impacts

28 **Mitigation.** The Project would not result in significant aesthetic impacts and no  
29 mitigation is required.

30 **Residual Impacts.** The Project would have no impact on aesthetics/scenic resources,  
31 no mitigation is required, and no residual impacts would occur.