

1 **3.3.11 Noise**

XI. NOISE: Would the Project result in:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the Project vicinity above levels existing without the Project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the Project vicinity above levels existing without the Project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) 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 the Project expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a Project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the Project expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2 **3.3.11.1 Environmental Setting**

3 **Existing Noise Environment**

4 **Onshore Component.** The onshore component of the Project is located at the DCP, which is an industrial-type facility. Ambient noise sources within the onshore area include ocean waves, the seawater intake pumps, small boats within the intake embayment area, routine maintenance activities at the various buildings, and DCP support facilities that surround the intake embayment area. The nearest sensitive receptors are located in the community of Avila Beach, and within the Montaña de Oro State Park, both approximately 8.8 km (5.5 mi) from the onshore component at the DCP facility. Additional information on noise levels and measurements is provided in Appendix F.

13 **Offshore Component.** The majority of Project activities would occur offshore of the DCP along Point Buchon, San Luis Obispo County, on the south-central coast of California. As such, the nearest sensitive receptor would be located at Avila Beach, more than 10.4 km (6.5 mi) to the southeast. The County of San Luis Obispo Noise Ordinance requires that existing exterior noise levels be measured at the property line of the affected noise-sensitive land use (§ 23.06.044); however, since the nearest sensitive land use is located 10.4 km (6.5 mi) from the offshore Project area (at Avila

1 Beach), site-specific noise measurements were not deemed necessary. Ambient noise
2 sources in the offshore Project area include ocean waves and occasional fishing and
3 commercial vessels.

4 3.3.11.2 Regulatory Setting

5 **Federal.** Federal regulation of noise has been addressed through EPA Guidelines as
6 well as Federal Aviation Administration (for air traffic noise), and the U.S. Department of
7 Transportation (DOT), Federal Highway Administration..

- 8 • The Noise Control Act of 1972 required the EPA to establish noise emission
9 criteria as well as noise testing methods (40 CFR Chapter 1, Subpart Q). These
10 criteria generally apply to interstate rail carriers and to some types of construction
11 and transportation equipment.
- 12 • The DOT regulates noise levels for motor vehicles (49 CFR Chapter III, Part
13 325). These standards address measurement protocols for measuring highway
14 noise, instrumentation, and stationary testing procedures.

15 **State.** State regulations for limiting population exposure to physically- and/or
16 psychologically-significant noise levels include established guidelines and ordinances
17 for roadway noise under the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as well
18 as the now defunct California Office of Noise Control. The California Office of Noise
19 Control land use compatibility guidelines provided the following:

- 20 • An exterior noise level of 60 to 65 dBA CNEL is considered "normally
21 acceptable" for residential uses.
- 22 • A noise level of 70 dBA CNEL is considered to be "conditionally acceptable."
23 This level is considered to be the upper limit of "normally acceptable" noise levels
24 for sensitive uses such as schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, churches,
25 parks, offices, and commercial and professional businesses.
- 26 • A noise level of greater than 75 dBA CNEL is considered "clearly unacceptable"
27 for residences.

28 **Local.** The Project is located within the DCPPI industrial facility located within the
29 jurisdiction of the County of San Luis Obispo. As such the County Local Coastal Plan
30 and General Plan Noise Element would be applicable to the Project. The County also
31 maintains a noise ordinance. Section 23.06.040 of the County Noise Ordinance
32 discusses thresholds of significance for developments with the intended purpose of
33 identifying standards for the protection of individuals from excessive noise levels. In
34 addition, section 23.06.042 discusses where those standards are applicable and which
35 areas would be exempt from such regulation.

36 3.3.11.3 Impact Analysis

37 **Significance Thresholds.** The County of San Luis Obispo identifies standards for
38 acceptable exterior (see Table 3.3.11-1) and interior noise levels and describes how

1 noise is to be measured. These standards are intended to protect persons from
 2 excessive noise levels that are detrimental to public health, welfare, and safety.
 3 Excessive noise levels can interfere with sleep, communication, relaxation and the full
 4 enjoyment of one's property. They may also contribute to hearing impairment and a
 5 wide range of adverse physiological stress conditions and adversely affect the value of
 6 real property. For noise thresholds to protect wildlife from excessive noise levels, please
 7 refer to Section 3.3.4, Biological Resources.

8 **Table 3.3.11-1.** County of San Luis Obispo Exterior Noise Thresholds

Exterior Noise Level Standards	Daytime	Nighttime (Applies only to uses that operate or are occupied during nighttime hours)
Hourly Equivalent Sound Level (Leq, dB)	50	45
Maximum level, dB	70	65

9 A significant impact would occur if noise levels exceeded existing standards, including
 10 the County requirement that: *“No person shall create any noise or allow the creation of
 11 any noise at any location within the unincorporated areas of the county on property
 12 owned, leased, occupied or otherwise controlled by such person which causes the
 13 exterior noise level when measured at any of the preceding noise-sensitive land uses
 14 situated in either the incorporated or unincorporated areas to exceed the noise level
 15 standards in the following table. When the receiving noise-sensitive land use is outdoor
 16 sports and recreation, the following noise level standards shall be increased by 10dB.”*

17 In addition: (1) the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable
 18 exterior noise level standard in subsection (a), the applicable standard shall be adjusted
 19 so as to equal the ambient noise level plus one dB; (2) each of the exterior noise level
 20 standards specified in subsection (a) shall be reduced by five dB for simple tone noises,
 21 noises consisting primarily of speech or music, or for recurring impulsive noises; and (3)
 22 if the intruding noise source is continuous and cannot reasonably be discontinued or
 23 stopped for a time period whereby the ambient noise level can be measured, the noise
 24 level measured while the source is in operation shall be compared directly to the
 25 exterior noise level standards.

26 **Impact Discussion**

27 ***a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of***
 28 ***standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or***
 29 ***applicable standards of other agencies?***

30 **Offshore Project Activities**

31 The Project consists of placing instruments and cable onto the seafloor within California
 32 state waters offshore of the DCP. The majority of Project activities would occur
 33 offshore away from areas of public access and onshore sensitive receptors. Vessel

1 equipment onboard the *MV Michael Uhl* includes a 104 horsepower (hp) generator, and
2 two 375 hp, 4-cycle main vessel engines. Use of this equipment will increase existing
3 noise levels within the offshore Project area.

4 Although unlikely, there is a possibility that some individuals would be within the Project
5 area on recreational or commercial vessels during OBS placement and recovery
6 operations. Noise generated by vessel and onboard equipment operations would not be
7 substantial and would not adversely affect persons on nearby boats. Therefore, this
8 short-term noise impact would not be significant. In addition, PG&E has agreed to
9 provide the required Notice to Mariners, which will specify vessel type, location,
10 operation, and contact information prior to in-water operations so that commercial and
11 recreational vessels are aware of Project activities and can avoid the work vessel area.

12 The nearest sensitive receptors to the Project area would be at Avila Beach, which is
13 located more than 8.9 km (5.5 mi) from proposed offshore activities. As such, noise
14 from offshore activities would not be audible to sensitive receptors, would not result in
15 an increase in ambient noise conditions at sensitive receptor locations, or result in noise
16 levels in excess of existing standards. Therefore, Project-related activities would be less
17 than significant.

18 Crew members aboard the Project vessel would be exposed to onboard noise from
19 equipment. Those potential effects would be minimized by measures provided in the
20 project-specific Health and Safety Plan, which will require the provision of ear protection
21 to all onboard personnel. Therefore, noise impacts to crew members would not be
22 significant and no mitigation is required.

23 Information on the effects of noise on marine biota is provided in Section 3.3.4
24 Biological Resources.

25 **Onshore Project Activities**

26 The only onshore component of the Project would occur within the existing DCP
27 facility and consist of the construction and installation of an extension of the conduit that
28 would house the power/data transfer cable. No public entry is currently allowed within
29 the DCP facility, and the nearest sensitive receptor to the onshore portion of the
30 Project is located at Avila Beach, more than 8.9 km (5.5 mi) south of the DCP. As
31 such, noise impacts associated with the use of hand tools during onshore project
32 activities would be minimal and would not expose individuals or sensitive receptor areas
33 to excessive noise. The impacts are considered to be less than significant.

34 The Project would generate a limited number of worker vehicle trips and truck trips to
35 deliver equipment (see Section 3.3.16, Transportation/Traffic, for information regarding
36 the traffic generation characteristics of the Project). Due to the small volume of vehicle
37 traffic generated by the Project, and the short-term and intermittent nature of Project-
38 generated vehicle trips, the Project's traffic noise impacts would be less than significant.

1 **b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration**
2 **or groundborne noise levels?**

3 The Project includes the installation of the OBS units in waters located offshore of the
4 DCPP as well as an extension of an existing conduit onshore. OBS units would be
5 placed onto the seafloor using an onboard vessel crane, and operation of the OBS units
6 would not result in the generation of any vibrations. Operation of the OBS units does not
7 generate any vibrations. The extension of the existing onshore conduit would be
8 constructed using hand tools. As such, no vibratory equipment would be required. No
9 ground-borne vibration would be associated with offshore or onshore project activities;
10 therefore, no impacts would occur.

11 **c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the Project**
12 **vicinity above levels existing without the Project?**

13 The Project includes the placement of temporary and long-term OBS units and cable
14 onto the seafloor. Installation activities are anticipated to require approximately seven
15 days. Following installation, long-term OBS units are expected to remain on the seafloor
16 for up to 10 years while data are recorded and transmitted to the onshore collection
17 area. The OBS units are passive recorders and therefore no additional noise would be
18 generated during the data collection activities. The only Project-related noise would be
19 the temporary sounds associated with installation activities. Due to the temporary nature
20 of installation activities, no long-term or permanent changes in the existing noise
21 environment would result. No impacts are expected to result.

22 **d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the**
23 **Project vicinity above levels existing without the Project?**

24 As discussed above, OBS and cable installation activities would not result in significant
25 temporary noise impacts to receptors located in onshore or offshore areas. Further, the
26 vessel's crew will be provided with ear protection to further reduce potential effects of
27 onboard noise. Therefore, temporary noise impacts of the Project would be less than
28 significant and no mitigation is required.

29 **e) For a Project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan**
30 **has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use**
31 **airport, would the Project expose people residing or working in the Project**
32 **area to excessive noise levels?**

33 See response below.

34 **f) For a Project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the Project**
35 **expose people residing or working in the Project area to excessive noise**
36 **levels?**

37 The Project is not located near any public or private airport or airstrip. The Project is not
38 located within a jurisdictional boundary of an airport land use plan. No impact would
39 result.

1 3.3.11.4 Mitigation and Residual Impacts

2 **Mitigation**. The Project would not result in significant short- or long-term noise impacts.

3 Therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

4 **Residual Impacts**. The Project would have no significant noise impacts. No mitigation

5 is required and no residual impacts would occur.