

1 **3.1 AESTHETICS**

AESTHETICS - Would the Project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 **3.1.1 Environmental Setting**

3 3.1.1.1 Onshore

4 The existing onshore oil and gas processing facilities are located within the Las Flores
 5 Canyon Processing Facility (LFCPF), approximately 20 miles (32 kilometers [km]) west
 6 of the City of Santa Barbara. According to the Santa Barbara County (SBC)
 7 Comprehensive Plan, Conservation Element (SBC 2010), this portion of the Gaviota
 8 Coast is located within the Coastal Zone. The nearest public roads, Calle Real and U.S.
 9 Highway 101, are located approximately 2 miles (3.2 km) south of the primary facilities,
 10 and approximately 300 feet (91 meters [m]) from the gated entrance to the LFCPF.

11 Highway 101, which parallels the ocean throughout much of the South Coast, affords
 12 scenic ocean vistas to thousands of travelers. The SBC (2009) Comprehensive Plan,
 13 Scenic Highways Element, describes Highway 101 from Gaviota to the South Coast
 14 Urban Complex (Cities of Santa Barbara and Goleta) as a Scenic Corridor and indicates
 15 that Highway 101, through its entire length in the County, is eligible for inclusion as a
 16 scenic highway.

17 The LFCPF is screened from public view by the topography of the canyon; however, the
 18 principal areas of onshore construction for the Project would be visible from portions of
 19 Highway 101 and Calle Real. North of Highway 101 and the Union Pacific Railroad
 20 (UPRR) tracks, a manhole exists providing entry to the tunnel under the highway and
 21 railroad, which would also be accessed during Project construction (a second manhole
 22 is present at the El Capitan State Beach [SB] south end of the tunnel). The manhole
 23 and signs indicating the presence of the pipelines and power cables are visible to beach
 24 goers in the area and recreationalists walking or riding along the bike path; however, the
 25 bike path in the area of the tunnel manhole is currently closed due to damage.

1 3.1.1.2 Offshore

2 The existing offshore facilities consist of three platforms (Platform Harmony, Platform
 3 Heritage, and Platform Hondo) located in Federal waters, between approximately 5 and
 4 8 miles (8 to 13 km) offshore. Views of the Project platforms may be gained from
 5 onshore public viewpoints (including beaches, trails and portions of Highway 101), and
 6 offshore areas including those from recreational or commercial boating vessels
 7 traversing between the Gaviota Coastline and the Channel Islands offshore.

8 In addition to the Project platforms, there are numerous subsea cables and pipelines.
 9 These cables and pipelines run between the Project platforms and to shore. Onshore,
 10 the pipelines and cables are buried within the surf zone and are therefore not visible
 11 from the beach or any other public area.

12 **3.1.2 Regulatory Setting**

13 3.1.2.1 Federal and State

14 The primary regulation regarding environmental protection under Federal jurisdiction is
 15 the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. However, NEPA did not include
 16 specific guidance for conducting visual and aesthetic environmental analyses in
 17 conformance. Instead, it set forth national environmental policy and goals for the
 18 protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment, and provided a process
 19 for implementing these goals within Federal agencies. The majority of Federal agencies
 20 have not yet created their own regulations and guidance for visual resource
 21 management (Port of Los Angeles [POLA] 2011). As such no Federal regulations
 22 pertain to the visual resources within the Project area. State laws and regulations
 23 pertaining to this issue area and relevant to the Project are summarized Table 3.1-1.

Table 3.1-1. Laws, Regulations, and Policies (Aesthetics)

U.S.	CZMA (see Table 1.3).	
CA	California Scenic Highway Program	The California Scenic Highway Program, managed by the California Department of Transportation, was created to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. State highways identified as scenic, or eligible for designation, are listed in California Streets and Highways Code section 260 et seq.
CA	Coastal Act Chapter 3 policies (see also Table 1-3)	The Coastal Act is concerned with protecting the public viewshed, including views from public areas, such as roads, beaches, coastal trails, and access ways. Section 30251 states: "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 landforms, to be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding area, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas."

1 3.1.2.2 Local

2 In addition to State regulations, the onshore portion of the Project is also located within
3 the local jurisdiction of the SBC. Local goals, policies, and/or regulations applicable to
4 this area are listed below.

- 5 • **Policy 4-1:** Areas within the coastal zone which are now required to obtain
6 approval from the County Board of Architectural Review (BAR), because of the
7 requirements of the “D”-Design Supervision Combining Regulations or because
8 they are within the boundaries of Ordinance #453, shall continue to be subject to
9 design review. In addition, developments in all areas designated on the land use
10 plan maps as Commercial, Industrial, or Planned Development and Residential
11 structures on bluff top lots shall be required to obtain plan approval from the
12 County BAR.
- 13 • **Policy 4-2:** All commercial, industrial, planned development, and greenhouse
14 projects shall be required to submit a landscaping plan to the County for
15 approval.
- 16 • **Policy 4-5:** In addition to that required for safety (see Policy 3-4), further bluff
17 setbacks may be required for oceanfront structures to minimize or avoid impacts
18 on public views from the beach. Blufftop structures shall be set back from the
19 bluff edge sufficiently far to insure that the structure does not infringe on views
20 from the beach except in areas where existing structures on both sides of the
21 proposed structure already impact public views from the beach. In such cases,
22 the new structure shall be located no closer to the bluffs edge than the adjacent
23 structure.
- 24 • **Policy 4-7:** Utilities, including television, shall be placed underground in new
25 developments in accordance with the rules and regulations of the California
26 Public Utilities Commission, except where cost of undergrounding would be so
27 high as to deny service.
- 28 • **Policy 4-9:** Structures shall be sited and designed to avoid unobstructed views of
29 the ocean from Highway 101, and shall be clustered to the maximum extent
30 feasible.

31 In assessing potential impacts to visual resources, the County’s Environmental
32 Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (2008) only considers impacts associated with
33 public (not private) views. As with most regulatory agencies, the County recognizes that
34 the classification of a Project’s visual or aesthetic impacts is subject to personal and
35 cultural interpretation. However, information provided within the County’s
36 Comprehensive Plan, Open Space Element (Republished 2009c) as well as within the
37 Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual provides a basic method for
38 assessing potential impacts involving two major steps.

- 1 • First, the visual resources of a project site must be evaluated. Important factors
2 in this evaluation include the physical attributes of the site, its relative visibility to
3 the public and its relative uniqueness. Specifically, significant visual resources as
4 noted in SBC's Comprehensive Plan Open Space Element which have aesthetic
5 value include: scenic highway corridors; parks and recreational areas; views of
6 coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, water sheds, mountains, and
7 cultural resource sites; and scenic areas.
- 8 • The second step in assessment includes the potential impact of the project on
9 visual resources located onsite and on views in the project vicinity that may be
10 partially or fully obstructed by the project must be determined.

11 **3.1.3 Impact Analysis**

12 ***a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?***

13 ***b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees,***
14 ***rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?***

15 ***c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its***
16 ***surroundings?***

17 **a) - c). Less than Significant Impact.** The onshore portion of the Project includes
18 activities within the LFCPF and the beach area between the offshore environment and
19 the LFCPF. The LFCPF is located along the Gaviota Coastline, within an area visible
20 from an eligible scenic highway (Highway 101) and within a scenic corridor. The LFCPF
21 is currently being used for activities in support of oil and gas processing from the
22 offshore Project platforms. Project activities include replacement-in-kind of the existing
23 cable system. As such, no change in the permanent use of the LFCPF is proposed.
24 Onshore impacts associated with Project activities would be limited to staging activities
25 and cable retrieval/installation activities only.

26 Staging of construction equipment would occur primarily within the LFCPF. Staging
27 activities and equipment would be temporary and removed from the site once the cables
28 have been replaced. Cable retrieval and installation activities would be expected to last
29 approximately 6 to 9 months for onshore activities. Onshore work activities would occur
30 during daylight hours except for operational and electric utility shut down periods when
31 work would be continuous. The Project would be visually compatible with the height,
32 scale and design of the existing facility. All impacts associated with staging activities at
33 the LFCPF would be temporary, and therefore less than significant.

34 The existing tunnel is located several hundred feet from the beach. Visitors to the beach
35 area would likely have views of some construction activities occurring on or near the
36 tunnel exit at the bike path. However, as with construction staging at the LFCPF,

1 activities at the tunnel would be temporary and removed from the site once the cables
2 have been replaced. No change in the permanent use of this area is proposed. All
3 impacts associated with staging activities at the tunnel would be temporary, and
4 therefore less than significant.

5 Offshore Project work includes activities at the Project platforms and within the ocean
6 along the existing pipeline and cable routes to shore. All new structures would be
7 located on the seafloor and not visible to the public. Activities include replacement-in-
8 kind of the existing cable system. As such, no change in the permanent use of the site
9 is proposed. Offshore impacts associated with Project activities would be limited to
10 Project vessels during cable retrieval/installation activities only. Project vessels would
11 be temporary and removed from the site once the cables have been replaced. As such,
12 the Project would not generate any long-term adverse impacts to aesthetic or visual
13 resources, nor would impacts to the visual character of the area be exacerbated.

14 ***d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect***
15 ***day or nighttime views in the area?***

16 **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** Onshore, Project work will require
17 temporary lighting within the lower canyon. These areas may be visible from U.S.
18 Highway 101 and Calle Real. Offshore, work at the Project platforms and on Project
19 vessels may occur 24 hours per day; therefore, night lighting would be required. Project
20 vessels are anticipated to be onsite between 30 to 60 days. Night glare from vessel
21 lighting and construction equipment would be visible to the public.

22 To reduce potential impacts caused by Project lighting, ExxonMobil shall implement the
23 following mitigation measure (MM) to minimize substantial light and glare or otherwise
24 ensure potential impacts to day or nighttime views in the area are less than significant:

25 **MM VIS-1: Glare Minimization.** Lights shall be shielded or re-aimed to minimize
26 glare from night lighting when used onshore or on vessels within 0.5 mile from
27 shore, unless such shielding would conflict with U.S. Coast Guard requirements.

28 **3.1.4 Mitigation Summary**

29 Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce the potential for
30 impacts to aesthetics to less than significant.

- 31 • MM VIS-1: Glare Minimization.