3.13 NOISE

NOISE - Would the Project:	**Potentially Significant Impact**	**Less Than Significant with Mitigation**	**Less Than Significant Impact**	**No Impact**
a) Result in 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?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☒	☐
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒
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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

3.13.1 Environmental Setting

3.13.1.1 Onshore

The onshore cables are located within the existing LFCPF between the southern portion of the facility and the beach between El Capitan State Park and Refugio State Park along the Gaviota coastline. The LFCPF is located on 34 acres of a 1,500-acre parcel owned by ExxonMobil. Historically, land use in the area has included agricultural and oil and gas development. The Gaviota coastline is generally unsuitable for urban development because most of the lands are subject to moderate to severe geologic problems (SBC 2009). As such, it has been left as open space by the SBC. The closest residence is located approximately 1 mile (1.6 km) southwest of the onshore Project site.

Existing noise sources in the area are primarily traffic on U.S. Highway 101 and Calle Real, ranching activities, and oil and gas-related operations at the ExxonMobil and former POPCO facilities. The nearest public receptors include recreational visitors and

camping facilities at Refugio and El Capitan SB Parks (located approximately 1.25 miles [2 km] and 0.65 mile [1.04 km] away respectively) as well as the bike path connecting the two recreation areas.

3.13.1.2 Offshore

The existing offshore facilities consist of the three platforms (Platforms Harmony, Heritage, and Hondo) and associated subsea pipelines and cables located in Federal waters, between 5 and 8 miles (8 to 13 km) offshore. The cables to the LFCPF are buried beneath the surf zone and are therefore not visible from the beach area.

3.13.2 Regulatory Setting

3.13.2.1 Federal and State

Federal and State laws and regulations pertaining to this issue area and relevant to the Project are identified in Table 3.13-1.

Table 3.13-1. Laws, Regulations, and Policies (Noise)

U.S.	• The **Noise Control Act** (42 USC 4910) required the USEPA to establish noise emission criteria, as well as noise testing methods (40 CFR Chapter 1, Subpart Q). These criteria generally apply to interstate rail carriers and to some types of construction and transportation equipment. The USEPA published a guideline (USEPA 1974) containing recommendations for acceptable noise level limits affecting residential land use of 55 dBA L_{dn} for outdoors and 45 dBA L_{dn} for indoors. • The **Department of Housing and Urban Development Environmental Standards** (24 CFR Part 51) sets forth exterior noise standards for new home construction (for interior noise levels, a goal of 45 dBA is set forth and attenuation requirements are geared to achieve that goal): o 65 Ldn or less - Acceptable o 65 Ldn and < 75 Ldn - Normally unacceptable, appropriate sound attenuation measures must be provided o > 75 Ldn - Unacceptable • **Federal Highway Administration Noise Abatement Procedures** (23 CFR Part 772) are procedures for noise studies and noise abatement measures to help protect the public health and welfare, to supply noise abatement criteria, and to establish requirements for information to be given to local officials for use in the planning and design of highways. It establishes five categories of noise sensitive receptors and prescribes the use of the Hourly L_{eq} as the criterion metric for evaluating traffic noise impacts. • Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Guidelines On Noise Emissions From Compressor Stations, Substations, And Transmission Lines (18 CFR 157.206(d)(5)) require that "the noise attributable to any new compressor stations, compression added to an existing station, or any modification, upgrade or update of an existing station, must not exceed a L_{dn} of 55 dBA at any pre-existing noise sensitive area (such as schools, hospitals, or residences)." • **NTIS 550\9-74-004, 1974** ("Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety"). The USEPA provided guidance in this document, commonly referenced as the, "Levels Document," that establishes an L_{dn} of 55 dBA as the requisite level, with an adequate margin of safety, for areas of outdoor uses including residences and recreation areas. The USEPA recommendations contain a factor of safety and do not consider technical or economic feasibility (i.e., the document identifies safe levels of environmental noise exposure without consideration for achieving these levels or other potentially relevant considerations), and therefore should not be construed as standards or regulations.

CA	State regulations for limiting population exposure to physically and/or psychologically significant noise levels include established guidelines and ordinances for roadway and aviation noise under California Department of Transportation as well as the now defunct California Office of Noise Control. The California Office of Noise Control land use compatibility guidelines provided the following: • An exterior noise level of 60 to 65 dBA Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) is considered "normally acceptable" for residences. • A noise level of 70 dBA CNEL is considered to be "conditionally acceptable" (i.e., the upper limit of "normally acceptable" noise levels for sensitive uses such as schools, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, churches, parks, offices, and commercial/professional businesses). • A noise level of greater than 75 dBA CNEL is considered "clearly unacceptable" for residences.

3.13.2.2 Local

Local goals, policies, and/or regulations applicable to this issue area are listed below.

The SBC Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (2008) contains discussion regarding noise thresholds. Although the thresholds are intended to be used with flexibility and each project is to be viewed in its specific circumstances, the following apply:

- A proposed development that would generate noise levels in excess of 65 A-weighted decibels (dBA) community noise equivalent level (CNEL) and could affect sensitive receptors would generally be presumed to have a significant impact.
- Outdoor living areas of noise sensitive uses that are subject to noise levels in excess of 65 dBA CNEL would generally be presumed to be significantly impacted by ambient noise. A significant impact would also generally occur where interior noise levels cannot be reduced to 45 dBA CNEL or less.
- A project will generally have a significant effect on the environment if it will increase substantially the ambient noise levels for noise sensitive receptors adjoining areas. In accordance with item “a.”, this may generally be presumed when ambient noise levels affecting sensitive receptors are increased to 65 dBA CNEL or more. However, a significant effect may also occur when ambient noise levels affecting sensitive receptors increase substantially but remain less than 65 dBA CNEL, as determined by a case-by-case level.
- Noise from grading and construction activity proposed within 1,600 feet of sensitive receptors, including schools, residential development, commercial lodging facilities, hospitals or care facilities, would generally result in a potentially significant impact. According to USEPA guidelines average construction noise is 95 dBA at a 50 foot distance from the source. A 6 dBA drop occurs with a doubling of the distance from the source. Therefore locations within 1,600 feet of the construction site would be affected by noise levels over 65 dBA. To mitigate this impact, construction within 1,600 feet of sensitive receptors shall be limited to weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. only. Noise attenuation

barriers and muffling of grading equipment may also be required. Construction equipment generating noise levels above 95 dBA may require additional mitigation.

3.13.3 Impact Analysis

a) Result in 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?

Onshore: Less than Significant Impact. Existing noise sources in the area are primarily traffic on U.S. Highway 101 and Calle Real, ranching activities, and oil and gas-relating operations at the ExxonMobil and former POPCO facilities. The nearest public receptors include recreational visitors and camping facilities at Refugio and El Capitan SB (located approximately 1.25 miles and 0.65 mile away respectively), as well as the bike path connecting the two recreation areas.

The SBC identifies construction noise levels within 1,600 feet (488 m) of sensitive receptors, including schools, residential development, commercial lodging facilities, hospitals or care facilities, as a potentially significant impact. Construction activities for the Project would be located approximately one mile (5,280 feet, 1,609 m) from the nearest residence, and approximately 0.65 mile (3,400 feet, 1,036 m) from the nearest lodging at El Capitan SB. Construction would not be located within 1,600 feet (488 m) of any sensitive receptor. As such, potential impacts from construction are less than significant.

Offshore: Less than Significant Impact. As discussed above, the SBC identifies construction noise levels within 1,600 feet (488 m) of sensitive receptors, including schools, residential development, commercial lodging facilities, hospitals or care facilities, as a potentially significant impact. Offshore construction activities would not be located within 1,600 feet (488 m) of any sensitive receptor. As such, potential impacts from offshore construction are less than significant.

b) Result in exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels?

Onshore: Less than Significant Impact. Onshore construction activities will require the use of general construction equipment including, but not limited to; backhoe, excavator, skip loader, dump truck, truck crane, soil compactor, generators, dewatering equipment and other smaller construction appurtenances. The Project will not require the use of impact devices (such as pile drivers, jack hammers or rock drills) or other vibration-inducing equipment. As such, ground-borne vibration and ground-borne noise

will be minimal and limited to the immediate construction area only. No significant impact would result.

Offshore: Less than Significant Impact. Offshore construction activities will occur on Project vessels and will not require the use of impact devices (such as pile drivers, jack hammers, or rock drills) or other vibration-inducing equipment. No significant impact would result.

c) Result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

Onshore: No Impact. The Project consists of the replacement of two of the three existing onshore LFCPF-to-platform based power cables (A2 [or B2] and F2) and fiber optic cable. The Project is primarily a replacement-in-kind. Following the completion of onshore Project activities within the LFCPF and tunnel, construction activities would cease and equipment would be removed from the site. No long-term or permanent noise impacts would result from cable operations.

Offshore: No Impact. Following the completion of offshore Project activities, Project vessels and equipment would be removed from the site. No long-term or permanent noise impacts would result from cable operations.

d) Result in a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

Onshore: Less than Significant Impact. The Project consists of the replacement of two of the three existing onshore LFCPF-to-platform based power cables (A2 [or B2] and F2) and fiber optic cable to POPCO. Following the completion of Project activities, construction activities would cease and equipment would be removed from the site. Noise impacts would be temporary and limited to construction activities only. Increases in ambient noise levels during Project activities would occur at the two locations: the staging and equipment areas within the LFCPF, and the staging area at the underground tunnel accessible from the State bike path as further discussed below.

Construction equipment (including a backhoe, excavator, skip loader, dump truck, truck crane, soil compactor, generators, dewatering equipment and other smaller construction appurtenances) will increase noise levels at the LFCPF site. However, as discussed above, construction activities at the LFCPF would be located on private property located approximately one mile (5,280 feet) (1.6 km) from the nearest residence, and approximately 0.65 mile (3,400 feet) (1.04 km) from the nearest lodging at El Capitan SB. Construction would not be located within 1,600 feet of any sensitive receptor. As such, potential impacts from construction are less than significant.

Staging for construction activities at the tunnel running beneath US Highway 101 and the railroad would be occur within the bike path between El Capitan SB and Refugio SB. Equipment would also be used at the tunnel entrance directly adjacent to the bike path located on a bluff approximately 30 feet from the public beach. Equipment will be brought into the tunnel and will be installed to facilitate cable removal, conduit cleaning, conduit gauging, conduit flushing and video of operations. Safety, ventilation and other equipment will be required to support the crews doing the work. Submarine cables in the tunnel will be placed on rollers and aids to facilitate removal. The concrete bulk head on the north side could require modification for cable removal and/or installation.

Use of equipment at this location would increase noise levels at the beach below. However, these impacts would be temporary and limited to the area directly adjacent to the tunnel entrance. The beach area will remain open and 1 to 2 miles (1.6 to 3.21 km) of beach area would remain available for beach users away from the construction area. Impacts would be less than significant.

Offshore: Less than Significant Impact. The following discussion pertains to potential impacts to the human noise environment. For potential noise effects on ocean-going mammal species, please refer to Section 3.5.3.1 (Marine Mammals) within the Biological Resources (Marine) section. Offshore noise impacts would be limited to construction activities and equipment located on the Project platforms and on Project work vessels only. Access to offshore Project work areas would be limited to construction personnel only. No public access to Project platforms or vessels is allowed. During construction activities a safety preclusion zone (approximately 500 m) would limit how close non-Project related vessels could get to Project platforms. These restrictions would keep any commercial or recreational ocean users from areas affected by equipment noise. Noise associated with Project equipment would have less than significant impacts on existing offshore noise environment.

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?

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?

e) and f). No Impact. The Project is not located within the vicinity of a public airport or private airstrip.

3.13.4 Mitigation Summary

No significant noise impacts will occur as a result of Project activities. No mitigation measures are proposed.