5.3 Aesthetics/Visual Quality

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative on aesthetics and the visual quality of the environment. The evaluation includes an assessment of the direct, indirect, short-term, long-term, and cumulative effects of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative on scenic vistas, scenic resources, and the existing visual character and quality of the project site and surrounding area. The evaluation is based on observations in the field, review of topographic maps, and developed visual simulations for selected viewpoints.

5.3.1 Affected Environment

The SV 50K study area would be a subset of the larger SV 100K study area and the Moosa 50K study area would be a subset of the larger Moosa 100K study area. Therefore, the following discussion refers to Section 3.3.1 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) and Section 4.3.1 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Moosa 100K Alternative) for information on the Affected Environment as it applies to the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative.

5.3.1.1 Environmental Setting

The environmental setting for the SV 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be the same as described in Section 3.3.1.1 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, and the setting for the Moosa 50K component would be the same as described in Section 4.3.1.1 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Moosa 100K Alternative) of this EIR/EIS.

5.3.1.2 Regulatory Setting

Refer to Section 3.3.1.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) and Section 4.3.1.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Moosa 100K Alternative) of this EIR/EIS for a discussion of the regulatory setting that applies to both the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components of this alternative.

5.3.2 Project Design Features

General Conditions and Standard Specifications that will be included in the project construction documents to reduce aesthetics/visual quality impacts associated with the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative are summarized in Sections 1.9.1 (Introduction, Aesthetics/Visual Quality) of this EIR/EIS. The SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would incorporate the same project design features presented to minimize impacts on aesthetics/visual quality as those described in Section 3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS.
5.3.3 Direct and Indirect Effects

5.3.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds of significance used to evaluate potential aesthetics/visual quality impacts for the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be the same as those used to evaluate impacts for the Proposed Action and the Moosa 100K Alternative. The thresholds are based on applicable criteria in the State CEQA Guidelines (CCR §§15000-15387), Appendix G and the ESP EIR/EIS. A significant aesthetic/visual quality impact would occur if the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Damage a scenic resource, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
3. Degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views or normal sleep patterns.

5.3.3.2 Impact Analysis

Methodology

The methodology used to evaluate impacts on aesthetics/visual quality at the SV 50K footprint is the same as described in Section 3.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, and the methodology used to evaluate impacts on aesthetics/visual quality at the Moosa 50K footprint is the same as described in Section 4.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Resources for the Moosa 100K Alternative) of this EIR/EIS.

Analysis

Threshold 1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista

SV 50K

As described in Section 3.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, SR-67 in the project area is designated by the County General Plan as a third-priority scenic highway in the Lakeside Community Plan. Third-priority routes do not have a specific timeline for preparation of corridor studies, as they meet only one of the four criteria of the Scenic Highway Element's Scenic Highway System Priority List.

There are no designated scenic turnouts or vistas along the segment of SR-67 within the SV 100K study area (third-priority scenic route) that offer views to a scenic resource. The SV 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would have a smaller dam raise, less
disturbance for quarry operations, and be fully contained within the disturbance limits of the larger carryover storage that would occur under the Proposed Action; therefore, no substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas would occur, and impacts from the SV 50K component of SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative to a scenic vista would be less than significant.

**Moosa 50K**

The Moosa 50K component would require construction of a pump station and pipeline near Old Castle Road. The pump station building would be expected to be about the same size and dimensions as the pump station required for the Moosa 100K Alternative and would be visible to some viewers. However, as described in Section 4.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for Moosa 100K Alternative) of this EIR/EIS, the inundation area and dam would not be visible from Old Castle Road. From Lilac Road, only the easterly perimeter of the new reservoir would be visible from the road in the project area. Impacts on scenic vistas from the Moosa 50K component would be less than significant.

**Combined Impacts**

Visual impacts related to scenic vistas would occur in two separate locations. Although there would be some limited views of the facilities from residents and motorists, no scenic views or vistas are present at those locations along SR-67, Old Castle Road, or Lilac Road. Therefore, the combined impact of the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components would be less than significant.

*The SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would not have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas. Therefore, impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be less than significant.*

**Threshold 2: Damage a scenic resource, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway**

**SV 50K**

As described in Section 3.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, impacts on scenic resources (including trees, rock outcroppings and historic buildings) within or visible from SR-67 (a third-priority scenic highway) would be less than significant. The SV 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would have a smaller dam raise, less disturbance for quarry operations, and be fully contained within the disturbance limits of the larger carryover storage that would occur under the Proposed Action. Therefore, impacts from the SV 50K component to scenic resources within SR-67 would be less than significant.

**Moosa 50K**

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality) of this EIR/EIS, the Moosa 100K Alternative would not damage scenic resources, including trees and rock outcroppings, within or visible from a scenic highway, and would not impact historic buildings. The Moosa 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would have a smaller dam raise, less
disturbance for quarry operations, and be fully contained within the disturbance limits of the larger carryover storage that would occur under the Moosa 100K Alternative. Therefore, impacts from the Moosa 50K component on a scenic resource within Old Castle Road and Lilac Road viewsheds would be less than significant.

**Combined Impacts**

Visual impacts would be generated in two different and widely separated portions of San Diego County. However, neither the SV 50K component nor Moosa 50K would adversely affect scenic resources such as trees, outcroppings, or historic buildings along the SR-67, Old Castle Road, Lilac Road viewsheds. Therefore, the combined impacts of the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components would be less than significant.

The SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would not damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway. Therefore, impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be less than significant.

**Threshold 3: Degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings**

**SV 50K**

As described in Section 3.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, the incremental increase in dam height and saddle dams would be barely detectable when compared to the existing dam. Moreover, resident and motorist views of the dam raise and quarry option sites would be substantially restricted or screened, or would blend into the background from the downstream side of the dam. The SV 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would have a smaller dam raise, would result in less disturbance for quarry operations, and would be fully contained within the disturbance limits of the larger carryover storage that would occur under the Proposed Action. Identical to the Proposed Action, this would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and surroundings, and therefore, impacts from the SV 50K component on the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surrounding would be less than significant.

**Moosa 50K**

As described in Section 4.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Moosa 100K Alternative) of this EIR/EIS, the new dam would affect the community character due to the high degree of contrast created by the construction of the dam and the change to or loss of important community characteristics. Short-term impacts on the existing visual character of Viewsheds 1 and 2, and long-term impacts in Viewshed 2, due to the new Moosa Dam would be significant. The new Moosa Pump Station would generate significant short-term and long-term impacts related to the visual character and quality of Viewshed 3 during and after construction. The VCMWD South and North Pump Station relocations would generate less-than-significant impacts on the visual character and quality of Viewsheds 4 and 5, respectively. Even though less area would be
inundated and a smaller dam constructed with the Moosa 50K component, these impacts would still occur. Therefore, impacts of the Moosa 50K component on the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings would be significant.

**Combined Impacts**

Visual impacts would be generated in two different and widely separated portions of San Diego County. The impacts from the SV 50K component on existing visual character or quality would be less than significant. However, the impacts on existing visual character or quality from the Moosa 50K component would be significant. Therefore, the combined impacts of the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components would be significant, although reduced in magnitude because less area within the viewsheds of both components would be disturbed.

The **SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative** would degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Moosa 50K project site and its surrounding. Short-term impacts on the existing visual character of Viewshed 1 (Impact SV/M/VQ 1) and Viewshed 2 (Impact SV/M/VQ 2), and long-term impacts in Viewshed 2 (Impact SV/M/VQ 3), due to Moosa Dam would be significant. The Moosa Pump Station would generate significant short-term and long-term impacts related to the visual character and quality of Viewshed 3 during construction (Impact SV/M/VQ 4) and after construction (Impact SV/M/VQ 5). Therefore, impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be significant.

**Threshold 4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views or normal sleep patterns**

**SV 50K**

There is potential for lighting impacts because the SV 50K dam raise and related aggregate production activities at the borrow area (“quarry”) would be a continuous 24/7 operation, extending through the night. The proposed construction schedule would require the use of night lighting for work performed during nighttime hours (e.g., RCC placement and aggregate production) to ensure the safety of working crews and employees. As described in Section 3.3.3.2 (Aesthetics/Visual Quality for the Proposed Action) of this EIR/EIS, project design features to reduce construction lighting and permanent glare impacts to less than significant would be incorporated into dam construction and design. Permanent security lighting on the SV 50K dam would be similar to the existing dam, and would be minimal and be directed downward. The raised dam would similar to the color of the existing dam, and the reflectivity of the downstream surface of the dam would be no greater than the existing dam. In addition, the raised dam would continue to be recessed deep into San Vicente Creek canyon and oriented away from any land uses and roadways that could otherwise be affected by daytime reflections from the RCC dam surface. The SV 50K component would incorporate the same project design features for construction and dam design to minimize light and glare impacts as the Proposed Action. Therefore, light and glare impacts from the SV 50K component would be less than significant.
Moosa 50K

The Moosa 50K component of this alternative would have a construction schedule requiring the use of night lighting for tunneling work performed during nighttime hours to ensure the safety of working crews and employees. Security lighting on the Moosa 50K dam would be minimal and would be directed downward. The dam finish would minimize the potential for glare. The Moosa 50K component would incorporate the same project design features for construction and dam design to minimize light and glare impacts as the Moosa 100K Alternative. Therefore, light and glare impacts from the Moosa 50K dam component would be less than significant.

Combined Impacts

Light and glare impacts would be generated in two different and widely separated portions of San Diego County. However, the impacts from the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components due to lighting and glare would be less than significant in each respective area because construction impacts that would temporarily alter views would be of limited duration, permanent nighttime lighting for security purposes at each dam would be designed and operated in accordance with General Conditions and Standard Specifications to minimize the potential lighting spillover effects, and the finish of the dams would minimize glare potential. Therefore, the combined impacts of the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components would be less than significant.

The SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would not create a new source of substantial lighting or glare. Therefore, impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would be less than significant.

5.3.3.3 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation has been identified to fully offset significant impacts on existing visual character or quality from the Moosa Dam in Viewshed 1 (Impact SV/M/VQ 1) and Viewshed 2 (Impact SV/M/VQ 2, Impact SV/M/VQ 3), and from Moosa Pump Station in Viewshed 3 (Impact SV/M/VQ 4, Impact SV/M/VQ 5). Therefore, impacts will remain significant and unmitigatable.

5.3.3.4 Residual Impacts after Mitigation

Even with implementation of General Conditions and Standard Specifications listed in Section 1.9.1 (Introduction, Aesthetics/Visual Quality) and the project design features in Sections 3.3.2 and 4.3.2, respectively, the aesthetics/visual quality impacts of the Moosa 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative (Impacts SV/M/VQ 1, SV/M/VQ 2, SV/M/VQ 3, SV/M/VQ 4, and SV/M/VQ 5) would be significant and unmitigatable. Therefore, a Statement of Overriding Considerations would be required for approval of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative.
5.3.4 Cumulative Effects

5.3.4.1 Other CIP Projects

CIP projects that would contribute to cumulative aesthetics/visual quality impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would include those projects that would also apply to the Proposed Action and the Moosa 100K Alternative identified in Sections 3.3.4.1 and 4.3.4.1, respectively. These projects would include the Slaughterhouse Terminal Reservoir, Hubbard Hill Flow Regulatory Structure, North County Distribution Pipeline Flow Regulatory Structure, and Second Crossover Pipeline. The PEIR for the Regional Water Facilities Master Plan concluded that development of the recommended water delivery, storage, and treatment facilities would result in cumulative adverse impacts on aesthetic resources in the region. Adverse aesthetic impacts would result from the construction of visible aboveground and partially buried facilities such as pump stations, treatment plants, and other ancillary facilities. It was also concluded that, in general, the facilities would occur in heavily modified urban and industrial settings or adjacent to existing facilities. The cumulative aesthetic/visual quality impacts of projects located in rural or open space areas were concluded to be of the greatest concern as they have the potential to create substantial visual contrasts with their settings. Implementation of program-level mitigation measures was anticipated to reduce cumulative aesthetic/visual impacts to below a level of significance. Those program-level mitigation measures, such as placing facilities below ground, using architectural designs, textures, and colors that complement the surrounding natural areas, and landscaping are applied to all Water Authority projects located within visually sensitive areas.

The above conclusions regarding cumulative aesthetic impacts for the four CIP projects described above are incorporated into the cumulative analyses in Section 5.3.4.3 below.

5.3.4.2 ESP Projects

ESP project components that would be in the vicinity of the SV 50K component would include the San Vicente Pipeline, the San Vicente Pump Station, and the San Vicente Surge Control Facility. The ESP EIR/EIS concluded that the surrounding extraction projects, including the Baxter project, would result in significant impacts on the existing landform and visual environment in the vicinity of San Vicente Dam. The ESP EIR/EIS further noted that construction associated with the San Vicente study area “would cumulatively contribute to visual impacts associated with the extraction projects. Motorists along SR-67, south and east along Vigilante Road and Moreno Avenue, and residents west of SR-67 would be impacted.” Cumulative visual quality impacts of the ESP were concluded to be significant. The above conclusions regarding visual impacts for the ESP projects are incorporated into the cumulative visual analyses in Section 5.3.4.3.

The San Vicente Surge Control Facility, located to the west of the existing dam, has the greatest potential to add to visual impacts of the SV 50K component. The visual impacts of the above-ground, 3-million-gallon concrete surge tank and on-site paving and fencing associated with the
surge control facility were concluded to be not significant because the addition of these features would be noticeable but would not dominate the landscape or stand out as developed uses in an otherwise pristine environment (Final Supplemental Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the San Vicente Surge Control Facility, February 2005).

**5.3.4.3 Other Planned Projects with CIP and ESP Projects**

This section evaluates the cumulative aesthetic impacts of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative when considered in conjunction with the other planned projects listed in Table 5.2-1, and incorporates the cumulative aesthetic impacts associated with the ESP and CIP projects described in the above section. The following cumulative aesthetic analysis addresses each of the four significance thresholds listed in Sections 5.3.3 above.

**Cumulative Threshold 1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista**

Impacts from the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components on scenic vistas along SR-67 would be less than significant. Therefore, the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative’s smaller contribution to a cumulative aesthetic impact on a scenic vista, when combined with impacts from the CIP, ESP, and other planned cumulative projects listed above, would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

**Cumulative Threshold 2: Damage a scenic resource, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway**

Impacts of the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components on scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway would be less than significant. Therefore, the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative’s smaller contribution to a cumulative aesthetic impact on scenic resources, when combined with impacts from the CIP, ESP, and other planned cumulative projects listed above, would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

**Cumulative Threshold 3: Degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings**

Impacts from the SV 50K component on the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surrounding would be less than significant. However, impacts on the existing visual character or quality of the project site and its surroundings from the Moosa 50K component would be significant and unmitigable (*Impacts SV/M/VQ 1C, SV/M/VQ 2C, SV/M/VQ 3C, SV/M/VQ 4C and SV/M/VQ 5C*). Therefore, the Moosa 50K Alternative’s contribution to cumulative aesthetic impacts, when combined with impacts from the CIP, ESP, and other planned cumulative projects listed above, would be cumulatively considerable. The cumulative impact would be significant and unmitigable.
Cumulative Threshold 4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views or normal sleep patterns

Construction and operational lighting impacts from the SV 50K and Moosa 50K components would be less than significant. Each component includes several design features (Section 5.3.3.2) that would minimize light and glare impacts. Therefore, the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative’s contribution to a significant cumulative aesthetic impact, when combined with impacts from the CIP, ESP, and other planned cumulative projects listed above, would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

The SV 50K component of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, would not damage scenic resources, and would not create a potential source of substantial light or glare. However, the Moosa 50K component would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of several viewsheds in the study area. Therefore, the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative’s contribution to cumulative aesthetic impacts (Impacts SV/M/VQ 1C, SV/M/VQ 2C, SV/M/VQ 3C, SV/M/VQ 4C and SV/M/VQ 5C), when combined with aesthetics/visual quality impacts associated with the ESP and CIP projects listed above, and planned cumulative projects listed in Table 5.2-1, would be cumulatively significant and unmitigable. A Statement of Overriding Considerations would be required for approval of the SV 50K/Moosa 50K Alternative.