4.16 Wildfire

This section discusses potential wildfire issues that could result from the Project. This section also describes the environmental setting, regulatory setting, identifies the applicable significance thresholds for wildfire impacts, assesses potential impacts of the Project, and recommends measures to mitigate any significant impacts, if applicable. The section also provides a discussion of cumulative impacts. Alternatives are discussed in Chapter 5.0, Alternatives.

Note that this section addresses the potential for the Project to impact issues that could exacerbate a wildfire, such as destabilizing slopes or affecting response capabilities to a wildfire. Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, addresses the potential for the Project to start a wildfire.

As described in Chapter 2.0, Project Description, the Project would include the demolition of aboveground infrastructure, and belowground infrastructure, where necessary, to allow for remediation of the site, followed by soil stabilization or revegetation of disturbed areas, with some minor long-term operations associated with remediation.

4.16.1 Environmental Setting

This section discusses the environmental setting for the Project consisting of the baseline and areas that could be affected by a wildfire at, or emanating from, the Project facilities. For baseline operations, the existing facility would be operating; therefore, risks of the Project are compared to the Santa Maria Refinery (SMR) operations, maintenance of equipment, and potential fires from equipment or vehicle traffic.

4.16.1.1 Area Communities and Environmental Resources

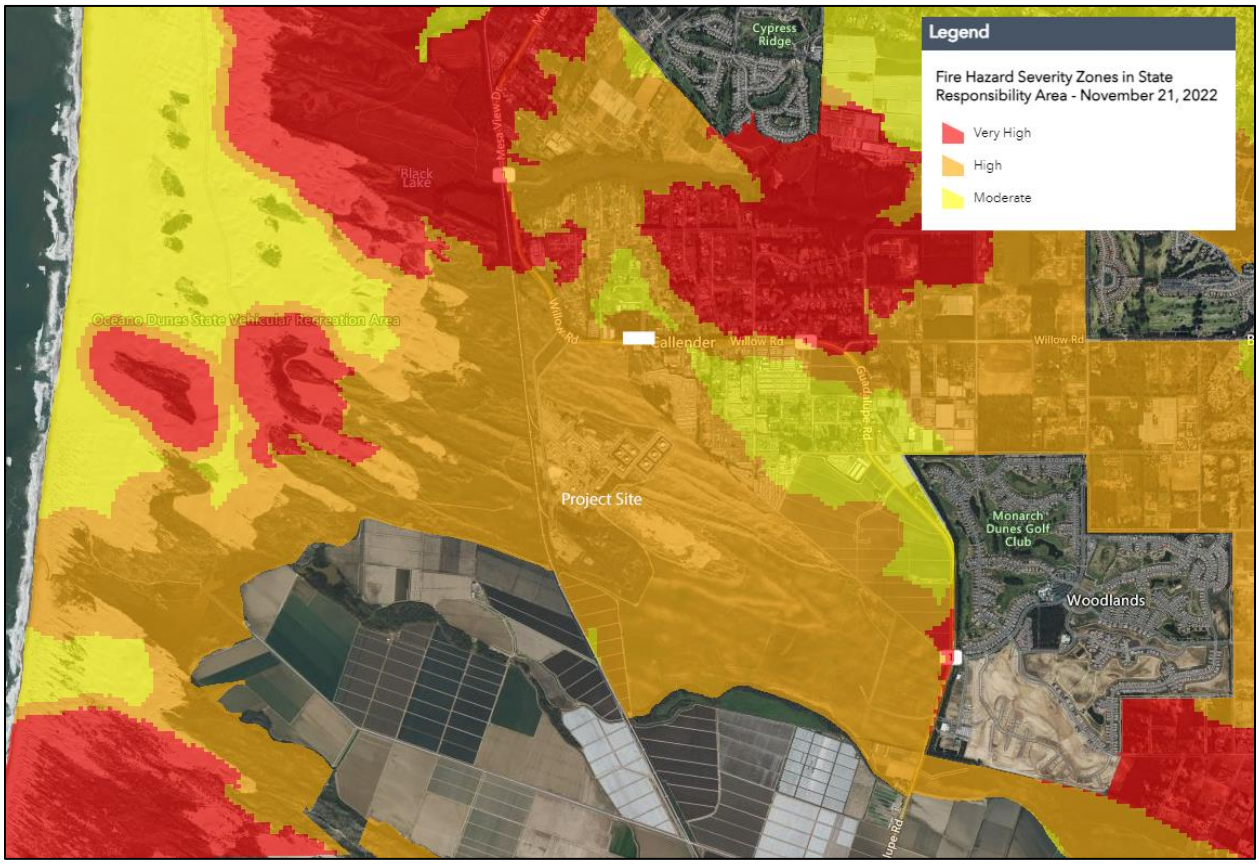
Environmental resources within the Project area residential communities located close to the facilities to the north and east of the SMR, commercial/industrial areas located to the east of the SMR, as well as agricultural areas to the south.

4.16.1.2 Wildfire Risk

The Project is located within a State Responsibility Area (SRA) but is not located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ). The closest Very High FHSZ is located to the north of the Project site, north and west of Willow Road about 1/3 mile north of the SMR entrance roadway. (OSFM 2023 currently undergoing regulatory review). Figure 4.16-1 shows the FHSZs associated with the Project area.

Although there are minimal and scattered trees located on the Project site, there are large stands of highly combustible eucalyptus trees located along the Project site boundary to the west, east and north. A California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) fire station is located along Willow Road 1/3 mile to the east of the Project site.

Figure 4.16-1 Project Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones



Source: OSFM 2023

4.16.1.3 Refinery Operations

The SMR maintains an emergency response plan to ensure that in the event of a fire, hazardous material release, medical emergency, or rescue situation, personnel will be able to respond to the emergency quickly and effectively to minimize personal injuries, environmental damage, and/or property damage. The SMR has an existing firewater system, with a firewater loop, tanks, pumps, and suppression/deluge systems. More information is provided in Chapter 2.0, Project Description.

4.16.2 Regulatory Setting

4.16.2.1 State Regulations

Fire response systems and capabilities are discussed in Section 4.13, Public Services, Utilities and Service Systems. CAL FIRE is responsible for the management and protection of California's 31 million acres of SRA, within which the SMR is located. CAL FIRE provides direction for fire prevention and enforcement of the Public Resources Code (PRC) within the SRA using fire resource assessments, a variety of available data, mapping, and other tools. Pre-fire management activities, including prescribed burning, fuel breaks, forest health treatments, and removal of

hazardous vegetation, are conducted. CAL FIRE also leads fire prevention planning and inspection efforts; regulates buildings in which people live, congregate, or are confined; controls hazardous substances and products; and regulates hazardous liquid pipelines. It also delivers land use planning and defensible space inspection programs (CAL FIRE 2019).

Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations addresses the "SRA Fire Safe Regulations," and constitutes the basic wildfire land fire protection standards of the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Title 14 establishes minimum wildfire protection standards in conjunction with building, construction, and development in the SRA.

Title 19 establishes the California Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), who oversees enforcement. Also, the Pipeline Safety Division of the OSFM has sole authority for the inspection and enforcement of federal and state regulations for intrastate pipelines within California. Federal authority is granted through an agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

Title 24 designates the OSFM as responsible for promulgating regulations that promote fire and life safety for inclusion into the State Building Codes including the California Building Code, California Fire Code, California Electrical Code, California Mechanical Code, California Plumbing Code, and California Historical Building Code. These documents are also referred to as California Code of Regulations, Title 24.

Section 4290, PRC regulations implement fire safety standards related to defensible space that are applicable to state responsibility area lands. The regulations include the following:

- Road standards for fire equipment access;
- Standards for signs identifying streets, roads, and buildings;
- Minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use; and
- Fuel breaks and greenbelts.

4.16.2.2 Local Regulations

Counties provide fire services at their discretion and service levels vary from county to county. The County of San Luis Obispo (County) chose to protect residents and property within its jurisdiction by creating County Fire in partnership with the CAL FIRE. The partnering and consolidation between County Fire and CAL FIRE are documented through contractual agreements that direct CAL FIRE/County Fire to provide fire protection and emergency response services and shared funding for the provision of such services. The County has an Emergency Operations Plan (County 2016) and a Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan (County 2013), both of which address a range of issues including organization, operations, recovery, and hazard assessments.

County General Plan Energy Element and Conservation and Open Space Element
In 1995, the County adopted the Energy Element as part of the County's General Plan, subsequently merged with the Conservation and Open Space Element. The Conservation and Open

Space Element contains a goal of protecting public health, safety, and environment and several policies that promote the stated goal (County 2010). The applicable policies include:

- Policy 64. Guideline 64.1. To reduce the possibility of injury to the public, facility employees, or the environment, the Applicant shall submit an emergency response plan which details response procedures for incidents that may affect human health and safety or the environment. The plan shall be based on the results of the comprehensive risk analysis. In the case of a facility modification, the existing response plan shall be evaluated by the safety review committee and revisions made as recommended; and
- Flammable and Combustible Liquid Storage. County Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance Section 23.06.126 includes requirements for flammable and combustible liquid storage relating to: applicability, permit requirements, limitation on use, limitation on quantity, setbacks, and including California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE) recommendations, as applicable. Without approval through a Development Plan, aboveground storage limits of combustible liquid is 20,000 gallons and 2,000 gallons for flammable liquids.

4.16.3 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds of significance for the Project are based on the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G. In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, would the Project:

a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan;

b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire;

c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment; or

d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

4.16.4 Impact Assessment Methodology

The approach and methodology to address potential wildfire risks are to utilize the thresholds and examine each of the issues independently. Existing fire response capabilities and issues specific to construction are addressed, such as clearing and potential brush ignition. The agreements established with and comments from CAL FIRE/County Fire are reviewed to ensure proper fire risk issues have been developed.

4.16.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Construction activities may involve clearing of materials, including brush, grasses, and trees that could be ignited by hot exhaust systems from construction equipment or sparks from welding activities, and could be a potential impact. Construction would involve the use of emergency generators, or other equipment including hot work, with hot exhausts that could potentially create sparks and start a wildfire if not sufficiently controlled or if the surrounding areas are not cleared of combustible materials.

Issues related to emergency response planning or emergency evacuation plans (Threshold (a)) are addressed in Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, impact HAZ.7.

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
WF.1	Threshold b): Would the Project, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors exacerbate wildfire risk and thereby expose Project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	Class II

As discussed in Section 4.9 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials) under impact HAZ.7, there is the potential for construction activities to generate sparks due to combustion equipment or hot work. These activities could spark a wildfire and thereby potentially impact nearby residential areas with fire and/or smoke issues. Mitigation described under impact HAZ.7 would address issues such as spark generation from combustion equipment during clearing, the performance of hot work protective measures, and ensuring that response capabilities are maintained through the Project. Without mitigation, impacts would be potentially significant.

Mitigation Measures

See impact HAZ.7 and mitigation measure HAZ.7-1 in Section 4.9, Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

Residual Impacts

Residual impacts would be **less than significant with mitigation (Class II).**

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
WF.2	Threshold c): Would the Project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	Class III

The Project would not involve the installation of infrastructure that could exacerbate fire risks. The Project would involve keeping some infrastructure, such as the substation, power lines, guard house, and other equipment that would not present a fire risk above historical operations. The Project would also retain all of the road circulation within the site and the existing water supply wells. All the major fire risk equipment associated with the Refinery operations would be removed,

and as such, the long-term fire risks in the overall area would decrease compared with historical operations. Therefore, impacts would be **less than significant (Class III).**

Impact #	Impact Description	Residual Impact
WF.3	Threshold d): Would the Project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	Class III

The Project site final contours and surfacing generally maintains all drainage on site consistent with pre-Project stormwater historical practices. Therefore, in the event of a fire, any firefighting water runoff would be retained on site and would not present a risk of runoff from firefighting water and subsequent post-fire erosion instabilities or flooding. As indicated in Section 4.7, Geology and Soils, there is no risk of landslides at the site which could impact nearby residences, or slopes towards nearby residences that could experience subsequent landslides if the soil cover was burned in a fire. Therefore, impacts would be **less than significant (Class III).**

4.16.6 Mitigation Measure Impacts to Other Issue Areas

Mitigation measure HAZ.7-1 involves fire response planning to ensure that any response to a fire at the facility would be effective and efficient and therefore would not have any impact on other issue areas.

4.16.7 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative projects are discussed in Chapter 3.0, Cumulative Study Area. Cumulative projects are discussed in each of the categories below.

Ongoing SMR projects, including the Slop Oil Spill and the Northern Inactive Waste Site (NIWS) remediation projects and the remaining facilities off-site projects (Summit Pump Station and Santa Maria Pump Station), would continue remediation efforts or remove existing equipment and would not have a cumulative impact for wildfire risks.

Other projects in the area, such as the Arroyo Grande Oil Field, Caballo Battery project or the Dana Reserve development projects, or the Santa Barbara County projects, would entail development in the area and could contribute to increases in potential wildfire risks in the area. However, none of the other projects are located in close proximity where a wildfire could affect the same receptors. Therefore, a cumulative impact would not occur.

Roadway projects would not entail large wildfire risks and would therefore not produce cumulative impacts.

4.16.8 References

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