

3.13 VISUAL RESOURCES

3.13.1 PROJECT AREA AND VICINITY

The Sycuan Property is located in the southwest portion of San Diego County approximately 19 miles east of the City of San Diego downtown area and 4 miles southeast of El Cajon. This area includes diverse visual elements including mountains, rock formations, rolling hills, open space, and canyons. The Sycuan Property is located in the foothills of the Peninsular Range, with two mountains, Sycuan Peak (at an elevation of approximately 2,800 feet) and McGinty Mountain (at an elevation of approximately 2,200 feet), lying just south of the property. The Sycuan Property ranges in elevation from just over 400 feet in elevation above mean sea level (msl) on the Sycuan Resort to just over 1,400 feet above msl on the former Starr Ranch. Major water resources include the Sweetwater River and its tributaries, which extend through the Sycuan Property, as well as man-made Lake Emma.

The Sycuan Property is located in a semi-rural area with small residential communities located among stretches of undeveloped land. Commercial and residential uses are centered on the City of El Cajon and unincorporated communities of Crest, Granite Hills, Dehesa, and Harbison Canyon. To the north of the Sycuan Property are open space areas of the Dehesa Valley and scattered rural residential, estate residential, and small single-family communities. Areas to the east and south are primarily open space and vacant land. The boundary of the Cleveland National Forest lies approximately two miles to the east. Between the western and eastern portions of the Sycuan Property is the existing Sycuan Reservation, which contains Tribal housing, Tribal government facilities, and commercial uses associated with the Sycuan Casino. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns land to the south of the Sycuan Property, which includes portions of the San Diego Wildlife Refuge. Along the southwestern project boundary is Willow Glenn Drive, a two-lane rural road with two residential subdivisions on either side. West of the Sycuan Property is rural-residential use, open space, and urban development associated with the City of El Cajon.

The Sycuan Property contains open space, scattered single-family residences, and commercial development associated with the Sycuan Resort. The Sycuan Resort consists of a hotel and spa, three 18-hole golf courses, a restaurant and lounge, and a tennis facility. The area of the Sycuan Resort is relatively flat when compared to the remainder of the Sycuan Property, which contains gently to steeply sloped hills and valleys. Lake Emma, an 86-acre lake created from sand mining activities on the Sweetwater River, is located immediately to the east of the Sycuan Resort on the Sycuan Property. The predominant vegetation communities on the Sycuan Property are chaparral and coastal sage scrub. The northeast portion of the Sycuan Property, the former Starr Ranch, is largely undeveloped and contains a few existing residences and buildings formerly associated with farming activities. The Sycuan Property is not located along or near a state designated highway. Site photographs are shown in **Figures 3.5-2a** and **3.5-2b**.

3.13.2 EXISTING GOALS AND POLICIES

The Crest/Dehesa/Harbison Canyon/Granite Hills Subregional Plan, Singing Hills Specific Plan Amendment and the Sloan Canyon Sand Company/Sweetwater Project Specific Plan are intended to guide development in keeping with the distinct physical, cultural and historical characteristics of the subregion. Overall, the goals, policies and recommendations for future development within the project area are designed to preserve open space, maintain the rural character of the area, preserve natural vegetation, incorporate geological formations in landscape designs and restrict the use of nighttime lighting throughout the subregion.