4.15 Recreation

4.15.1 Introduction

This section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses potential impacts of the proposed project on parks and recreation opportunities in the project’s vicinity. This section also describes the environmental and regulatory settings and discusses mitigation measures (MMs) to reduce impacts, where applicable.

4.15.2 Environmental Setting

The project site is located at the base of the Tehachapi and Piute Mountains in the Mojave Desert, just west of the Fremont Valley, within Kern County (see Figure 3-1). Kern County offers many recreational opportunities, including camping, hiking, horseback riding, boating and water skiing, bird watching, picnicking, and scenic viewing.

Local

The Kern County Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains 40 neighborhood parks throughout the County as well as several public buildings that also are used for recreational purposes. The neighborhood park closest to the project area is Balsitas Park in California City, 14.4 miles southeast of the project area. A recreational racetrack is located 10.2 miles east of the project boundary. An unpermitted private airport, located 1.2 miles northwest of the project area, has been used by recreational un-powered or low-powered aircraft pilots, although local land use approval has not been active for this facility.

The Jawbone Canyon Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area, 1.9 miles east of the project area, is an Open Area for OHV use within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Jawbone-Butterbredt Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The Jawbone Canyon Open Area is a designated off-highway vehicle use area managed by the BLM. It is located on over 7,000 acres along both sides of Jawbone Canyon Road from SR-14 west 6 miles. There is a BLM visitors’ center located on Jawbone Canyon Road at the entry to the Open Area at SR-14. Other than two portable toilets, there are no developed facilities within the Open Area. The area is used for open camping by recreational vehicles, motor homes, and other vehicles. The predominant use of the Open Area is by off-road motor vehicles. A wide variety of riding opportunities exist in the area, including cross-country rides, trail riding, hill climbs, and advanced four-wheel driving. The “open” area designation permits cross-country travel by vehicles (i.e., off-road vehicles are not limited to designated routes and may be operated anywhere within the open area boundaries except on Jawbone Canyon Road itself) (BLM, 2007). The fall and winter months, especially on holiday weekends, are high use periods for the Open Area, when several thousand people may visit in a single day (Waldheim, 2011).

Regional

The Kern County Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains eight regional parks (Buena Vista Aquatic Recreational Area, Greenhorn Mountain Park, Leroy Jackson Park, Kern...