3.16 Visual Resources

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (referred to throughout as the Draft EIS/R) describes existing visual resources within the project area for Eden Landing Phase 2 of the South Bay Salt Pond (SBSP) Restoration Project. It then analyzes whether the project implementation would cause a substantial adverse effect on visual resources. The information presented is based on a review of existing visual and aesthetic resources within the area and other pertinent federal, state and local regulations. Potential impacts to visual resources associated with each alternative are assessed. The program-level mitigation measures described in Chapter 2, Alternatives, would be implemented as part of this project which influence the overall approach to design and construction for this phase of the project, however as a result, this section only includes additional mitigation measures as needed.

3.16.1 Physical Setting

Methodology

The development of the baseline visual conditions, significance criteria, and impact analysis for Eden Landing Phase 2 is informed by the programmatic and Phase 1 project-level analyses presented in the 2007 SBSP Restoration Project Final EIS/R (2007 Final EIS/R). The assessment of existing visual conditions is also based on site specific reconnaissance to gather baseline information on the existing visual character within and surrounding the Phase 2 project area at the Eden Landing pond complex (AECOM 2016).

This section presents a qualitative inventory of existing visual and aesthetic conditions and provides an assessment of the potential impacts of each of the project alternatives. The impact assessment considers changes to individual views and the visual character/visual quality of the project area that could result from each of the proposed Action Alternatives. This analysis is commensurate with the level of detail and assessment for findings produced for Phase 1 at northern Eden Landing, and for Phase 2 at the Refuge Ponds. Accordingly, no visual simulations were produced as part of this particular analysis.

Regional Setting

The greater Bay Area is within in the Coast Ranges Physiographic Province, which spans 400 miles of the California coast region from Humboldt County in the north to Santa Barbara County in the south. The San Francisco Bay region is characterized as having a Mediterranean climate, with Coast Redwood forest and chaparral and woodlands among the dominant the most recognizable habitat types. The San Francisco Bay Area is largely urbanized; however, views toward the open water, and upland open space areas are common. Views toward the Bay typically feature attributes such as tidal marsh and/or salt ponds.

The Eden Landing Phase 2 project area is situated along the southeast shoreline of San Francisco Bay just west of Union City and within the limits of the City of Hayward. Prominent landscape features visible from within the Eden Landing phase 2 project area include the San Francisco Bay (or Bay) to the west, the East Bay hills to the east, the Santa Cruz Mountains to the southwest, the Coyote Hills Regional Park (operated by East Bay Regional Park District) to the south, and restored tidal wetlands and enhanced managed ponds within the Phase 1 portion of Eden Landing just to the north.

Dominant man-made features visible from the Phase 2 project area include the San Mateo Bridge (State Route [SR] 92), high voltage transmission lines, the Bay Bridge, the skyline of downtown San Francisco, and Sutro Tower. The visual setting of the project area transitions from light industrial (Union Sanitary District [USD]) and commercial, to single-family residences, and again to commercial. Views to the west include rolling hills, open space, baylands, tidal marsh and salt ponds.

The Phase 2 project area is visible from surrounding areas including from recreational, transit, and residential uses including: Coyote Hills Regional Park, the San Mateo Bridge, and incoming planes to regional airports. Viewers from these and other elevated vantage points have the unique angle of observation that allows greater perspective of how the Phase 2 project area forms a transitional barrier between the open water of the bay, and the upland edge of the true shoreline.

Project Setting

Each of the Phase 2 project area ponds is bounded by a low-lying berm-like levee. These upland areas visually delineate the boundaries of each pond and break up distant views of what is otherwise shallow, open water, as a remnant of the former use for production of salt. These berm-like levees form the upland barrier surrounding both the Eden Landing complex and the Phase 2 project area, and allow vehicular and pedestrian access between the individual ponds. These berm separations between ponds range from curvilinear to straight lined upland features that add a sense of geometry and order to the landscape. The pond boundaries are levees/berms that create a visual limit or termination to each pond, and the greater Phase 2 project area and the narrow band of upland material, consisting of shades of brown and green, provides harmonious contrast to the blues and greens associated with the salt ponds and open water. Long-range views from the project area include the East Bay hills, Santa Cruz Mountains, developed cities on the peninsula, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) transmission lines, and levees.

The Phase 2 project area includes 11 ponds that are described in three groups. Groups are based on their location within the complex along with their proximity and similarity to one another.

- The Bay Ponds: Ponds E1, E2, E4, and E7 are the four large ponds closest to San Francisco Bay.
- The Inland Ponds: Ponds E5, E6, and E6C are somewhat smaller ponds in the northeast portion of the complex.
- The Southern Ponds (or C-Ponds): Ponds E1C, E2C, E4C, and E5C are in the southeastern portion of the complex.

The following subsections provide a brief overview of the existing visual character of the project area as exemplified in photographic images taken from within each of the three pond groups and of the Phase 2 project area. Note, however, that southern Eden Landing is not generally open to the public. Licensed hunters are allowed access to portions of southern Eden Landing during duck hunting season, and there is a public access trail on the north levee of the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel (ACFCC), which forms the southern boundary of the Phase 2 project area. The proposed Phase 2 Action Alternatives would increase this public access by adding trails, bridges, and at least one viewing platform. The locations of these features would vary by alternative, as discussed elsewhere.

Bay Ponds

The Bay Ponds (Ponds E1, E2, E4, and E7) make up the four large ponds closest to San Francisco Bay. Of the Bay Ponds, Pond E2 is the largest (by area) and forms the boundary of the Southern Eden Landing area with the outward edge of the Bay.

Figure 3.16-1 was taken at the north side of Pond E7, just west of its border with Pond E6 on the existing spur of the Bay Trail that runs through the project area. The image faces south toward the open water of Ponds E7 and E4. As demonstrated in the figure, Turk Island and Coyote Hills Regional Park are prominent upland landscape features that bring distant sense of sequence and contrasting convex form to what is an otherwise horizontal and flat landscape. The mid to foreground areas visible from the north side of the Bay Ponds is dominated by open water. Views toward the remnant location of the Old Alvarado Salt Works add contrasting structural development to an otherwise undeveloped landscape. The stumpy and irregularly shaped wooden piles of the remnant structure create a small stippled texture within the otherwise smooth or uniform nature of the open water in the pond. Additional information on the historical Old Alvarado Salt Works is located in Section 3.7 Cultural Resources. The Old Alvarado Salt Works is not a publicly accessible area, though one Action Alternative would provide a Bay Trail spur or loop trail to this destination. So this feature of the landscape may someday be opened to recreational viewers.

Views from the Bay Ponds to the south, west, and north are also characterized by open, undeveloped space that is also characterized by a simple, flat, and horizontal fore to midground distantly enclosed by the convex and vertical form of the Santa Cruz Mountains and Marin Headlands. Views to the east are also dominantly open space in the foreground, but commercial and urbanized areas of Union City, Fremont, and Hayward are sandwiched between the East Bay Hills and the Bay. Because southern Eden Landing is not open to most types of public access (current recreational use is limited to in-season hunting in certain pond areas by licensed hunters), the typical viewer groups are limited numbers of hunters, researchers, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) employees. As noted in many other sections of this document, however, the Phase 2 Action Alternatives would add trails, viewing platforms, and pedestrian/bicycle bridges in several different parts of Eden Landing.

Figure 3.16-1. View of Pond E7 and Turk Island, Facing South

Inland Ponds

The Inland Ponds are situated in the northeast corner of the Phase 2 project area and are just east of the Bay Ponds. The Inland Ponds include Ponds E5, E6, and E6C, and are each smaller than the Bay Ponds.

Figure 3.16-2 was taken from the southeastern corner of Pond E6C along the eastern boundary of the project and faces west northwest. There are no designated trails currently in this area of the Inland Ponds. As demonstrated in the image, views to the west of the Inland Ponds and Bay Ponds are distantly enclosed by the Santa Cruz Mountains located on the west side of the Bay on the peninsula. Views from the Inland Ponds toward the west and north are panoramic and unobstructed. Foreground to midground views are characterized by a mix of open water and upland berm areas that separate the Ponds. The upland areas associated with these berms draw the viewers eye as they create contrasting form, line, color, and texture with the dominant non-linear nature of the open water that occupies most views toward individual Ponds. Currently only the upland berm areas separating the ponds are vegetated, and therefore the sinuous to geometric form these berms follow appear course to smooth in texture with muted rounded to form dominated by natural shades of light to dark brown and pale greens which complement the typically bright blue nature of the open water within the salt ponds.

Figure 3.16-2. View of Pond E6C, Facing West

Southern Ponds

The Southern Ponds include Ponds E1C, E2C, E4C, and E5C are located in the southeastern portion of the complex. The Southern Ponds surround a natural hill known as Turk Island that is a private inholding. Turk Island is prominently visible in views throughout the project area, but particularly from the ACFCC trail and in west-facing views from the Southern Ponds.

Figure 3.16-3 was taken along the southern boundary of Pond E5C facing east toward Hayward. The PG&E distribution line and remnant structures associated with salt production are among the few visible structural and vertical elements in existing views from this area. As discussed above, the East Bay Hills distantly enclose easterly views from the project, and add a sense of rounded topography that contrasts with the open space of the project area that occupies the fore to midground of most easterly views from within the project area. Natural shades of brown, pale green, and blue dominate the landscape. Vegetation is sparse, and limited to areas surrounding access roads and levees. Where present, the vegetation adds a medium to fine grained texture to the composition of views, which contrasts with the otherwise smooth and glassy nature of calm conditions within the ponds.

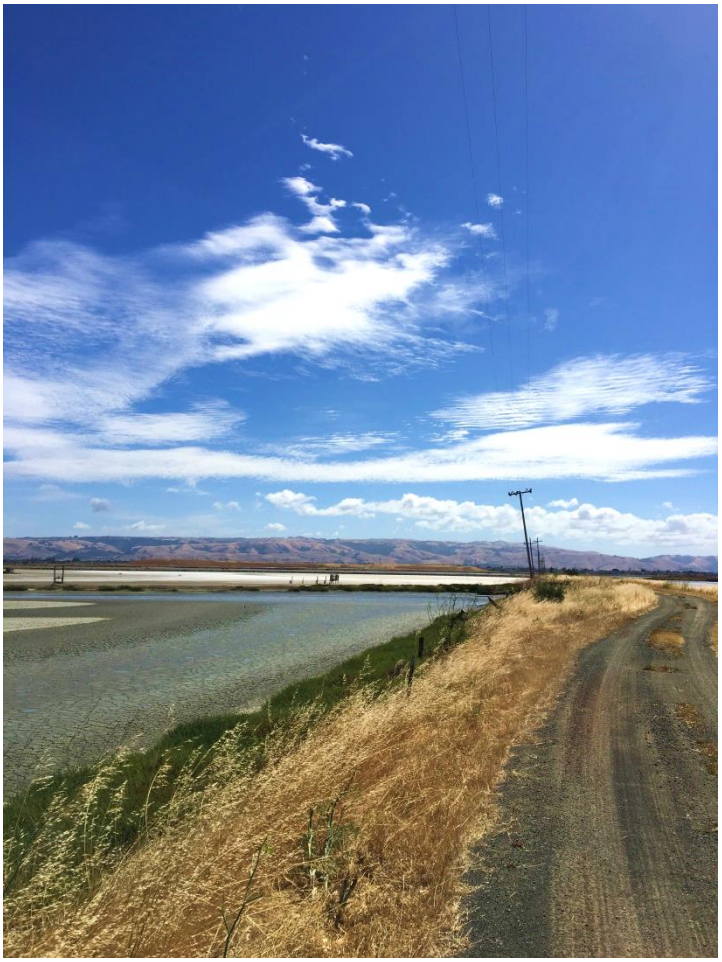

Figure 3.16-3. View from Levee Separating Ponds E5C and CP3C, Facing East

3.16.2 Regulatory Setting

This section describes the regulatory goals of the jurisdictions surrounding the Phase 2 project area with regard to visual resources in the salt pond area. These goals are defined in city and county general plans and regional planning documents.

Eden Landing Land Management Plan

Section 1019 of the California Fish and Wildlife Code requires the CDFW to draft and adopt Land Management Plans for any property wholly under its jurisdiction and that was purchased after January 1, 2002. While the plan makes no specific recommendations pertaining to scenic views or visual resources, the plan does include permit mechanisms to allow duck hunting and other recreation activities within the project area[1] (CDFW 2015).

[1] Section 550, General Regulations for Public Use on All Department of Fish and Wildlife Lands, describes access and use restrictions associated with wildlife viewing, hiking, and waterfowl hunting on CDFW managed lands.

Alameda County

The Alameda County General Plan designates salt ponds as open space, and among its objectives is providing "a continuous system of open space for the preservation, enhancement, and protection of natural scenic features and preservation and protection of watershed and wildlife areas and agricultural areas" (County of Alameda 1973).

City of Hayward

The City of Hayward identifies the Bay shoreline as a significant regional open space, ecological, and aesthetic resource. The Hayward General Plan 2040 provides polices and strategies to protect the shoreline as well as other resources that provide similar functions (City of Hayward 2014). Policies concerning protection of scenic resources are identified under the Natural Resources Element, as described below. Goal NR-8 strives to "enhance, preserve, and increase the aesthetic qualities of Hayward's undisturbed natural hillsides and shoreline, and designated scenic transportation corridors."

Other Relevant Plans in the Region

The City of Fremont borders the southern portion of the project area, and Union City borders the eastern project boundary. As such, views toward the project area from within these jurisdictions are possible, and relevant goals, policies, and strategies associated with visual resources germane to each are described below.

City of Fremont

The City of Fremont General Plan (2011) provides policy guidance on the protection of Bayland resources. Fremont abuts the southern boundary of the project area to the south of ACFCC.

The policy relevant to the proposed SBSP Restoration Project in protecting the City's visual resources includes:

- Policy 2-6.3: Baylands: Manage Fremont's Baylands as permanent open space. The habitat and ecological value of these areas should be conserved and restored to the greatest extent possible. This may include specific land management prescriptions not only for the baylands but for adjoining upland properties that may impact wetland or bay habitat value. Planning for the baylands should consider the effects of climate change and sea level rise. Much of the Baylands acreage is in public ownership and is subject to regulation by agencies such as the US Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Game, and Army Corps of Engineers. The acreage also includes ponds used for commercial salt production. These areas are generally designated for Resource Conservation on the Land Use Map.

City of Union City

Union City is adjacent to the Phase 2 project area and views from the project area to the City are possible. Union City's 2002 General Plan Policy Document (City of Union City 2002) identifies the goals and policies relating to visual resources within the City's jurisdiction, so the following do not directly apply to the project, however would influence the surrounding visual character of views from the project area toward development within Union City:

- Goal CD-E.2: To provide visual and physical access to the bay marsh edge

- Policy CD-E.2.1: The City shall provide access to vies of the salt marshes
- Policy CD-E.2.2: The City shall minimize the visual impact of marsh-edge development through the use of buffers such as pedestrian trails, linear parks, and landscaped rights of way.
- Policy CD-E.2.3: The City shall ensure that new development respects its natural setting by maintaining visual harmony with the wetlands area.

San Francisco Bay Plan

The Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views section of the San Francisco Bay Plan provides the findings and policies related to the visual effects of development on the shoreline (Bay Conservation and Development Commission [BCDC] 2012). Specific policies relevant to the SBSP Restoration Project include the following numbered items (irrelevant items not included in this list):

3. In some areas, a small amount of fill may be allowed if the fill is necessary—and is the minimum absolutely required—to develop the project in accordance with the Commission's design recommendations.

4. Structures and facilities that do not take advantage of or visually complement the Bay should be located and designed so as not to impact visually on the Bay and shoreline. In particular, parking areas should be located away from the shoreline. However, some small parking areas for fishing access and Bay viewing may be allowed in exposed locations.

8. Shoreline developments should be built in clusters, leaving open area around them to permit more frequent views of the Bay. Developments along the shores of tributary waterways should be Bay-related and should be designed to preserve and enhance views along the waterway, so as to provide maximum visual contact with the Bay.

9. "Unnatural" debris should be removed from sloughs, marshes, and mudflats that are retained as part of the ecological system. Sloughs, marshes, and mudflats should be restored to their former natural state if they have been despoiled by human activities.

10. Towers, bridges, or other structures near or over the Bay should be designed as landmarks that suggest the location of the waterfront when it is not visible, especially in flat areas. But such landmarks should be low enough to assure the continued visual dominance of the hills around the Bay.

12. In order to achieve a high level of design quality, the Commission's Design Review Board, composed of design and planning professionals, should review, evaluate, and advise the Commission on the proposed design of developments that affect the appearance of the Bay in accordance with the San Francisco Bay Plan findings and policies on Public Access; Appearance, Design, and Scenic Views; and the Public Access Design Guidelines. City, county, regional, state, and federal agencies should be guided in their evaluation of bayfront projects by the above guidelines.

14. Views of the Bay from vista points and from roads should be maintained by appropriate arrangements and heights of all developments and landscaping between the view areas and the water. In this regard, particular attention should be given to all waterfront locations, areas below

vista points, and areas along roads that provide good views of the Bay for travelers, particularly areas below roads coming over ridges and providing a "first view" of the Bay (shown in San Francisco Bay Plan Map No. 8, Natural Resources of the Bay).

15. Vista points should be provided in the general locations indicated in the [San Francisco Bay Plan] maps. Access to vista points should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means to connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where parking or public transportation is available. In some cases, exhibits, museums, or markers would be desirable at vista points to explain the value or importance of the areas being viewed.

The proposed Phase 2 project components would be consistent with the San Francisco Bay Plan.

3.16.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

The significance criteria for visual resources are drawn from those adopted for the 2007 Final EIS/R. The 2007 Final EIS/R defined the project as having a significant impact on visual resources if it would:

- Have a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Phase 2 project area does not contain any designated scenic vistas and is not within the viewshed of a state scenic highway. Furthermore, the Phase 2 project does not include lighting or contain materials that would generate substantial light or glare. Therefore, the Phase 2 project was not evaluated against these significance criteria, and this Draft EIS/R does not evaluate the impacts associated with them. The two other significance criteria listed above are included in Impact 3.16-1, which addresses altering the view and visual character of the Phase 2 project ponds.

Although both the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (AEP 2016) were considered during the impact analysis, the impacts identified in this Draft EIS/R are characterized using CEQA terminology.

Program-Level Evaluation

The 2007 Final EIS/R evaluated the potential visual impact of three long-term, program-level alternatives, each of which were determined to have less-than-significant impacts to visual resources, scenic resources, and scenic character. The 2007 Final EIS/R found that under each programmatic alternative, the historic salt production remnants (e.g., piers, Archimedes' screws) would continue to remain in place, therefore limiting changes to visual character in terms of structural development. Furthermore, the 2007 Final EIS/R found that none of the programmatic alternatives would include lighting components or materials that would generate substantial light and glare.

Project-Level Evaluation

Phase 2 Impact 3.16-1: Alter views of the SBSP Restoration Project area and vicinity.

Alternative Eden A (No Action). Under Alternative Eden A, no new activities would be implemented as part of the Eden Landing Phase 2 project. The CDFW would continue maintaining and operating the ponds as part of the ELER in accordance with the *Eden Landing Ecological Reserve System E2 and E2C Operation Plan* (Operations Plan), the activities described in the Adaptive Management Plan (AMP), and current CDFW practices. The levees around the ponds are high priority levees to be maintained for inland flood risk management. Under collaboration with the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (ACFCWCD), these outboard levees would be maintained (or repaired upon failure). The ACFCWCD would continue to direct the highest stormwater runoff flows into and out of the J-ponds and associated channels as needed. The existing PG&E distribution lines (running along the north side of the E1, E7 and E6, along with the distribution line bisecting E2C and running along the south side of E5C and E4C) would remain active and be unaffected by long-term operation of the Reserve. No new recreation or public access features would be added in Alternative Eden A. However, the existing trail along the ACFCC would continue to be maintained.

Under Alternative Eden A, all non-priority levees within the Phase 2 project area would be allowed to settle over time, and due to wave action, unintentional breeching, and levee overtopping, these levees would become increasingly prone to failure. However, because high priority flood risk management levees and utility access points and maintenance rights-of-way would be maintained, the overall existing character as isolated managed ponds would continue to exist. Ongoing operations and maintenance of the high priority levees would cause the ponds to retain their isolation from the Bay and keep them as managed ponds. Existing views would remain largely intact and unaltered except for the slow dissolution of the berms that currently separate the ponds. Since the area would not be opened to public access, these extremely slow and minor changes to the existing visual character of the landscape would not be seen by viewers. Therefore, implementation of Alternative Eden A would result in no impacts to existing views.

Alternative Eden A Level of Significance: No Impact

Alternative Eden B. Alternative Eden B would restore the entirety of southern Eden Landing to tidal marsh in a single project implementation stage. Dredge material would be brought in to raise pond bottom elevations in the Bay and Inland Ponds and to build habitat transition zones. The eastern, backside levees would be improved to provide the necessary degree of flood risk management. Habitat enhancements including transition zones, islands made from remnant levees, channel excavation, and breaching and lowering of portions of internal and external levees would be implemented. Two sections of internal levee improvements would also be made along the J-ponds and other ACFCWCD-owned channels. Alternative Eden B features the inclusion of treated water from USD and brackish water from groundwater wells, and the placement of root wads and logs outside of Pond E2 to help trap sediment and form beach-like areas while providing some erosion protection. The Southern Ponds would become connected to the ACFCC through a pair of water control structures and an additional structure within them. The Bay Trail spine would be completed through southern Eden Landing on one of a number of routes, one of which would be on the improved internal levees above. There would be one viewing platform added.

Alternative Eden B has the potential to result in construction-related impacts to visual resources from public viewing points near the southern Eden Landing ponds, on a periodic basis as the construction

schedule dictates. General construction activities would include excavation, earth movement, levee enhancements, levee lowering, and the installation, use, and demobilization of dredge material placement infrastructure. The presence and movement of heavy construction equipment and potential construction-related generation of dust could temporarily degrade visual resources in the area.

As previously discussed, public access and public viewing points near the southern Eden Landing ponds are currently limited – licensed hunters are allowed access to portions of southern Eden Landing during duck hunting season, and there is a public access trail on the north levee of the ACFCC (the Alameda Creek Regional Trail). During construction, hunting access would be curtailed in areas and at times where those activities could cause safety issues, but public access to the trail on the north levee of the ACFCC would generally be unaffected, with the exception of temporary closures for construction or modification of water control structures and other features at and near the ACFCC. During dredge material placement, views from the Alameda Creek Regional Trail would include the booster pump and/or substation at the southwest corner of Pond E2, pipelines on Pond E2 and E4 levees, and potentially views of the pipeline and offloading facility in the Bay. Views of the offloading facility would be similar in nature to many other barges and construction vessels that are seen around the Bay. Although it would not be seen from the Alameda Creek Regional Trail at night, the offloading facility and associated equipment would have navigation lighting, as per United States Coast Guard guidelines, and be lit at night and in periods of restricted visibility. Once dredge material placement was complete, the offloading facility, pipelines, booster pumps, and substations would be decommissioned and removed, and would no longer affect views from the Alameda Creek Regional Trail. Over the long-term, views of the project area would change due to increased tidal action and the activity/motion created by increased flow between and within the ponds through added breaches. Additionally, the Southern Ponds would be internally breached to allow greater flow between one another and a water control structure added to allow greater connectivity to ACFCC. Greater public access would be achieved through the completion of the Bay Trail spine allowing greater numbers of users to access new portions of the project area in a safe and reliable manner. The ponds would gradual change color over time becoming tidal marsh and increasing the presence of vegetation in areas previously maintained as open water. The immediate addition of a habitat transition zone on the backside levee of the Inland and Southern Ponds would introduce a similar change in color and texture, but the change would be more abrupt, because the habitat transition zone would be constructed purposefully over a specified period, whereas the tidal mudflat throughout the currently open water areas of the ponds would develop more gradually over time.

Under Alternative Eden B, the views and visual character of the Phase 2 project area would be gradually altered over a decade or more to a more natural character indicative of tidal marsh and would provide new recreational opportunities for user experience. Therefore alternation of existing views and potential impacts associated with the actions described above would be less than significant.

Alternative Eden B Level of Significance: Less than Significant

Alternative Eden C. Implementation of Alternative Eden C would retain the Inland Ponds and the Southern Ponds as managed ponds and add a number of water control structures to allow the depth and salinity of these ponds to be actively managed for a range of different pond-dependent wildlife. Bottom elevations would be raised in the Bay Ponds, and the Bay Ponds would be restored to tidal marsh, as in Alternative Eden B, through the use of a mid-complex levee that would largely be built on top of the existing internal levees. This alternative would feature a similar range of habitat enhancements as Alternative Eden B but in different locations. The Bay Trail is planned for the same routes as Alternative Eden B, but Alternative Eden C would add an additional set of trails on either side of the Old Alameda

Creek (OAC) and a bridge over the OAC to connect them. These trails would form a spur trail to the site of the Alvarado Salt Works, and a viewing platform there. Another large bridge would be built over the ACFCC to extend the Bay Trail spine further and beyond the ELER boundary itself.

As with Alternative Eden B, views of the southern Eden Landing ponds would change during construction and views of the Bay Ponds would also change over the long-term due to increased tidal action and the activity/motion created by increased flow between the Bay Ponds and OAC. The Inland and Southern Ponds would retain their existing aesthetic as they would function as managed ponds, but with added controlled connectivity between and among them. The Bay Ponds would gradually change color over time becoming tidal marsh and increasing the presence of vegetation in areas previously maintained as open water. The immediate addition of a habitat transition zone on the mid-complex levee separating the Bay Ponds and the Inland Ponds would introduce a similar change in color and texture, but the change would be more abrupt, because the habitat transition zone would be constructed purposefully over a specified period, whereas the tidal mudflat throughout the currently open water areas of the ponds would develop more gradually over time.

Under Alternative Eden C, the views and visual character of the Bay Pond area of the project area would be gradually altered to a more natural character indicative of tidal marsh, while the Southern and Inland Ponds would appear much the same as they do now, but with greater access to natural tidal flux. Alternative Eden C would provide even more new recreational opportunities for user experience compared to Alternative Eden B. Therefore alternation of existing views and potential impacts associated with the actions described above would be less than significant.

Alternative Eden C Level of Significance: Less than Significant

Alternative Eden D. Alternative Eden D is a staged implementation of the tidal marsh restoration outlined in Alternative Eden B. Bottom elevations would be raised in the Bay and Inland Ponds. A mid-complex levee would be used for habitat separation, as in Alternative Eden C, but that levee would be temporary. This separation of the Bay Ponds from the others would allow those large outer ponds to first be restored to tidal marsh, after which, the mid-complex levee would be removed, and the Inland and Southern Ponds then restored to tidal marsh. Water control structures would be added to the Inland and Southern Ponds for use during the years in which they would be operated as managed ponds and then removed to allow tidal flows. The trail options and the associated viewing platform would be similar to those in Alternative Eden B.

As with Alternative Eden B and Alternative Eden C, views of the southern Eden Landing ponds would change during construction and views of the Bay Ponds would also change over the long-term due to increased tidal action and the activity/motion created by increased connectivity between the Bay Ponds and OAC. The Inland and Southern Ponds would retain their existing aesthetic as they would function as managed ponds, but with added controlled connectivity between and among them. The Bay Ponds would gradually change color over time becoming tidal marsh and increasing the presence of vegetation in areas previously maintained as open water. The immediate addition of a habitat transition zone on the mid-complex levee separating the Bay Ponds and the Inland Ponds would introduce a similar change in color and texture, but the change would be more abrupt, because the habitat transition zone would be constructed purposefully over a specified period, whereas the tidal mudflat throughout the currently open water areas of the ponds would develop more gradually over time.

Under Alternative Eden D, the Inland Ponds and Southern Ponds would eventually transition tidal marsh similar to Alternative B. In this respect, the long term change to the existing visual character would be most similar between Alternatives B and D. Views toward and of the Bay Pond, Southern Ponds, and Inland Ponds would collectively over time become similar as they returned to their natural character indicative of tidal marsh. As with Alternative C, Alternative Eden D would provide the same increased opportunities and features for recreational opportunities and user experience. Based on the short term function of the Inland Ponds and Southern Ponds functioning as enhanced managed ponds, and the transition of the Bay Ponds in the shorter term to tidal marsh, the first a continuation of existing conditions and the second a transition to natural habitat, the impact of the actions associated with Alternative D would be less than significant.

Alternative Eden D Level of Significance: Less than Significant

Impact Summary

Phase 2 impacts and levels of significance for visual resources are summarized in Table 3.16-1. The levels of significance are those remaining after implementation of program-level mitigation measures, project-level design features, and the AMP and other Refuge management documents and practices. The visual resources analysis required no project-level mitigation measures to reduce the impacts to a level that was less than significant.

Table 3.16-1 Phase 2 Summary of Impacts – Visual Resources

IMPACT	ALT. EDEN A	ALT. EDEN B	ALT. EDEN C	ALT. EDEN D
Phase 2 Impact 3.16-1: Alter views of the SBSP Restoration Project areas.	NI	LTS	LTS	LTS

Notes:
Alternative Eden A is the No Action Alternative (No Project Alternative under CEQA).
LTS = Less than Significant
NI = No Impact

This page intentionally left blank