

1. Purpose

It is incumbent on designers to preserve the aesthetic qualities of scenic areas (that are to eliminate or minimize adverse visual impacts). In order to accomplish this, a method of evaluating the aesthetic value of sites and facilities is needed. This report provides a systematic approach to aesthetic evaluation – a pursuit generally assumed to be subjective. Our approach achieves a degree of objectivity by producing accurate representations of the study object, identifying the field from which it is observable, and applying a systematic, reproducible aesthetic evaluation from within that field. While this report was developed to evaluate a specific proposed development, the methodology described herein is applicable to any project.

This document was prepared incidental to Task 3.4.3- Environmental Considerations- for the DOD STS Ground Support System. Its primary purpose was to gain insights into, and assess aesthetic impacts associated with, the development of the proposed Shallow Draft Barge Facility at the Point Arguello Boathouse in support VCR-76-055 Appendix 70- Environmental Protection Plan for V33 External Tank Processing and Storage Facilities- and to provide supplementary information for criteria development and design. Secondary objectives of this document were to recognize an aesthetic awareness within the STS program, and to assist SAMSO with the DOD STS Environmental Impact Statement process.

2. INTRODUCTION

Consideration was given to delivery of External Tanks (Ets) at the Point Arguello Boathouse (Figure 1) via Shallow Draft Barge (SDB). This delivery concept requires the construction of an SDB docking facility with the capability of transporting the Ets from a wharf to the top of the 50-ft coastal terrace. Accomplishment of this requirement involves the excavation in the coastal bluff to provide an access road from the wharf to the top of the terrace. A cut of the required size in this relatively pristine coastline will alter the aesthetic value of the area.

2.1 Overview. Our National policy, as stated in the National environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) Section 101 (b), is to “assure for all Americans safe, Healthful, productive, and esthetically* and culturally pleasing surroundings” (emphasis added) in the course of Federal Project Development. Section 102 (c) of the NEPA also requires that reports of a project include a detailed statement concerning any irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources, which would be involved (1)**. The California Coastal Act of 1976, Section 30251, states that “the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance” (2). This, legislative requirements exist for analysis of changes in the aesthetic qualities of an area under consideration for development by any federal agency (A)***.

A Common approach to meeting such requirements is to state that a proposed facility will be visible and hence aesthetically impact the area and that the impact will be positive or negative depending upon the observer’s preconceived notions of beauty. Such statements, although easily justified philosophy, fail to give any insights into the actual aesthetic impacts of a project.

The methodology utilized in this evaluation portrays anticipated visual changes in an accurate manner and describes the subjective effects of such change on the visual quality of the scene. Visual quality as used in this report is taken to mean the sum of three components: 1) the memorability of a scene; 2) its degree of development; and 3) the harmony of its parts. These components are respectively referred to as vividness, innocents, and unity (3).

2.2 Summary of conclusion and mitigation measures. The relative inaccessibility of the project area to the public limits the aesthetic impacts. The project is not visible for public highways, trails or aircraft. It is only barely visible for trains, commercial ships, and Jalama Beach County Park. The area could be visible from nearby on-base beaches and from pleasure craft passing close in.

*Esthetic is a variant of aesthetic (from the Greek aesthetes, one who perceives- pertaining to a Sense of the beautiful).

**Numbers in parentheses are keyed to contacts given in Section 7 of this report.

***Capital letters in parenthesis are keyed to contacts given in Section 6 of this report.

Application of aesthetic criteria in Appendix A shows no aesthetic degradation to be visible from beaches. From pleasure, craft there will be aesthetic degradation, which will be most severe from positions near projections of the cut centerline. From other orientations to the SDB Facility, aesthetic degradation will occur, but will be less noticeable than from the cut centerline projection (Section 4.2). Overall, aesthetic degradation is therefore rated as moderate.

Retention of the boathouse during SDB Facility development would slightly reduce the overall aesthetic degradation (Section 4.3).

In general, design engineers should familiarize themselves with aesthetic considerations and reflect the new awareness in the facility design. Reduction of cut size, relocation rather than elimination of the boathouse, and camouflaging including the use of color additives to the concrete pad and ramp to match surroundings, and aesthetically nonobtrusive erosion controls can be considered.