



## California Environmental Quality Act

### NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE ARICA SOLAR AND VICTORY PASS SOLAR PROJECTS

**LEAD AGENCY:** California Department Fish and Wildlife

**CONTACT:** Magdalena Rodriguez (909) 844-2520

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Report pursuant to Sections 21092 and 21092.3 of the Public Resources Code and CEQA Guidelines Section 15086 and 15087

**SCH NO:** 2020100076

**PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD:** August 6, 2021 through September 20, 2021

**Project Location:** The Arica Solar Project and the Victory Pass Solar Project (collectively referred to as the Projects) sites and associated facilities would encompass approximately 2,724 acres of a 3,800-acre site on Bureau of Land Management–administered land in Riverside County, north of Interstate 10 and approximately 5.5 miles east of Desert Center, California (see Figure 1).

**Project Description:** Arica Solar LLC and Victory Pass I LLC (Applicants) have applied for Incidental Take Permits for the Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) under the California Endangered Species Act and submitted Lake and Streambed Agreement notifications to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as part of a broader proposal to construct the Projects. The Projects propose utility-scale solar photovoltaic electrical generating and storage facilities and associated infrastructure to generate and deliver renewable electricity to the statewide electricity transmission grid. The Arica Project would generate 265 megawatts (MW) and the Victory Pass Project would generate 200 MW of energy using alternating current solar photovoltaic technology. Each Project would include up to 200 MW of battery storage. The total potential ground disturbance would be 2,724 acres overall (1,355 acres for the Arica site, 1,310 acres for the Victory Pass site, approximately 52 additional acres along the shared gen-tie corridor, and less than 7 acres for access roads).

CDFW, consistent with their obligation as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, has analyzed and disclosed the environmental effects of the Projects, in combination, as the “whole of the action” in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Notwithstanding the proposed exercise of CDFW’s regulatory authority under the California Fish and Game Code, construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Projects over 35 to 50 years will cause other environmental impacts across the resource spectrum that are relevant under CEQA. The Draft EIR addresses the environmental effects of both Projects because they are immediately adjacent to one another, would share the same switchyard and single operations and maintenance facility, and would share a 3.2-mile gen-tie line to the existing Southern California Edison Red Bluff Substation, located south of Interstate 10. The Incidental Take Permits and Lake and Streambed Agreements, if issued by CDFW subject to certain conditions, would remain in effect for 5 years.

Construction of the proposed Projects would begin once all applicable approvals and permits have been obtained. It would take approximately 18 months for Arica and 16 months for Victory Pass from the start of construction to completion of the Projects. The Projects are anticipated to start construction at the same time, so the bulk of the construction for each Project would overlap.

During construction, minimal grading would occur, and temporary workspaces and staging areas would be developed. Access roads may be graded and widened and an access road, if not existing, would be developed to access the gen-tie line facilities. Upon completion of construction, temporary disturbance areas would be restored.

**Location of Environmental Impact Report Available for Public Review.** The EIR may be viewed online at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Notices>. In accordance with Governor’s Executive Order N-80-20 (in effect per EO N-08-21 through September 30, 2021), public notices are not required to be made physically publicly available, but are required to be posted on the lead or responsible agency’s website for the same length of time that would be required for physical posting.

**Public Comment Period:** By this notice, CDFW is announcing the opening of the 45-day comment period (August 6, 2021, to September 20, 2021). All written comments must be received by September 20, 2021, by 5:00 p.m. (end of the 45-day public review period).

**Commenting on Environmental Impact Report:** Written comments on the EIR must be addressed to:

**California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Inland Deserts Region**

**Attention:** Magdalena Rodriguez, Project Manager

**Mailing Address:** 3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220, Ontario, California 91764

OR via email: [Magdalena.Rodriguez@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:Magdalena.Rodriguez@wildlife.ca.gov)

(subject line: “**Arica and Victory Pass Solar Projects EIR Comments**”).

The Projects are not located on any list of places formally recorded as containing hazardous materials.

