APPENDIX C

Public Scoping Documents

Appendix C.1

Index to Public Scoping Comments

APPENDIX C1 - INDEX TO PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS

On October 13, 2020, the California State Lands Commission (CSLC), as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) and initiated a 30-day public comment period on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Stagecoach Solar Project (see EIR Section 1.3.1, *Public Scoping*). On October 28, 2020, CSLC staff also held two virtual public meetings to receive comments on the scope of the EIR.

This appendix contains the comments received during public scoping, including letters and emails, transcripts of the scoping meetings, and written comments submitted at the scoping meetings. The CSLC also accepted comments submitted after the close of the scoping period. Table C-1 lists all scoping commenters and assigns an identification number. Table C-2 refers the reader to where the comment is addressed in the EIR.

Table C-1. Scoping Commenters and Comment Set Numbers

Agency/Affiliation/Individual		Date of Comment	NOP Comment Set
Agency (State, Local, or Regional)	San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department	11/06/20	A1
	San Bernardino County Supervisors	11/12/20	A2
	Town of Apple Valley	11/13/20	A3
	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	11/13/20	A4
	Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center	11/17/20	A5
Non-Governmental Organization	California Unions for Reliable Energy (CURE)	10/14/20	B1
	Saint Joseph Monastery	11/03/20	B2
	Scenic 247 Committee	11/05/20	B3
	Desert Tortoise Council	11/11/20	B4
	Mojave Desert Land Trust	11/12/20	B5
	Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association	11/13/20	B6
	Defenders of Wildlife	11/13/20	B7
	Coalition of Individuals and Community Groups	11/13/20	B8
	SC Wildlands	11/13/20	B9
	Morongo Basin Conservation Association	11/13/20	B10
Individual	Brad Hicks	10/18/20	E1
	Bill Lembright	11/13/20	E2
	Neil Nadler	11/12/20	E3
	Brian and Sue Hammer	11/13/20	E4
	Tina Eyraud	6/15/21	E5

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department	
A1-1	Section 2.0, *Project Description,* identifies the scope of the Proposed Project and EIR.
A1-2	Section 2.0, *Project Description,* provides details of the location of on-site and off-site improvements. The Project Description provides a footnote listing the APN numbers of the six undeveloped State-owned parcels.
A1-3	Section 4.11.2, *Land Use and Planning, Regulatory Setting* addresses the Countywide Plan as well as the Lucerne Valley planning area. San Bernardino County's General Plan Renewable Energy and Conservation Element restricts development of renewable energy projects in Lucerne Valley, the location of the Proposed Project and the Commission's school land parcel. However, the State, acting by and through CSLC, has supremacy over its political subdivisions, including San Bernardino County. Thus, CSLC's lease issuance would preempt the County's requirements to the extent that they would conflict with the lease. CSLC regards such a conflict as a significant and unavoidable impact to Land Use and Planning. (see Section 4.11.4, *Land Use and Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis*)
A1-4	Section 4.3.2, *Biological Resources,* includes information regarding the Apple Valley MSHCP/NCCP, and the compatibility or conflict with the MSHCP/NCCP.
A1-5	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare,* addresses concerns about SR-247 and its status as a State-Eligible Scenic Highway within each KOP analysis.
A1-6	Section 4.2, *Air Quality,* discusses blowing sand and dust as an impact to air quality that must be mitigated and monitored.
A1-7	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* discusses impacts to groundwater supply related to water use during construction. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
A1-8	Section 4.2, *Air Quality,* discusses air quality impacts due to blowing dust and sand and Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* discusses the soils the Project will be built on and potential impacts of soil erosion for both geology and soils and air quality.
A1-9	Section 2*, Project Description,* discusses decommissioning and Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* will include mitigation requiring restoration of the site, including revegetation with native plants and success monitoring if needed.
A1-10	Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts,* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Solar Generation Project and the potential for the substation to drive additional development.
A1-11	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The use of renewable energy focus areas, and previously disturbed areas is discussed in this section.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
A1-12	Section 1.5*, Agency Use of this Document* discusses the specific permits which need to be sought from the County and other permitting entities.
San Bernardino County Supervisors (Robert Lovingood and Dawn Rowe)	
A2-1	See comment A1-3 above.
A2-2	Section 4.3.2, *Biological Resources*, includes information regarding the Apple Valley MSHCP/NCCP, and considers the compatibility with the MSHCP/NCCP. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* explains that the Project is on State-owned land under CSLC jurisdiction, and the Apple Valley MSHCP (if it were adopted), does not apply. Section 4.11.2 also states that the MSHCP has been proposed but has not been approved or adopted.
A2-3	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway
A2-4	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare* discusses the impacts of the Project's visual change to the Lucerne Valley.
A2-5	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning,* explains the ownership of the solar facility site. Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The depth in which the alternatives are analyzed is determined by the lead agency. The consideration of DFAs defined by the DRECP and private lands such as North of Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, is discussed in this section
A2-6	See comment A1-3 above.
Town of Apple Valley	
A3-1	Section 4.3.2, *Biological Resources*, includes information regarding the Apple Valley MSHCP/NCCP, and addresses its potential compatibility with the MSHCP/NCCP (if it were adopted). Section 4.3.1.3 discusses the ACECs and wildlife linkages in the area.
A3-2	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* addresses relevant wildlife linkages and effects on desert tortoise in Section 4.3.1.3.
A3-3	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* states that the applicant is required to obtain all necessary permits and approvals to impact threatened and endangered species under the ESA, CESA, and MBTA. Refer to Appendix A for applicable regulations, policies, and standards. Section 2*, Project Description*, explains that Southern California Edison would obtain the necessary permits or authorizations for the Calcite Facilities in consultation with USFWS.
A3-4	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The depth in which the alternatives are analyzed is determined by the lead agency. The use of DFAs via a land

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	swap, defined by the DRECP, or private lands such as North of Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, are discussed in this section.
California Department Fish and Wildlife	
A4-1	Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources* includes an assessment of flora and fauna in the Project footprint, identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their habitats. Figures 4.3-3 and 4.3-4 identify special status plants and animals in the Project footprint. Section 4.3.1.3 also includes an assessment of the various habitat types located within the Project footprint, and Figure 4.3-5 identifies the location of each habitat type.
A4-2	Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources* includes a general biological inventory of fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite. Additional detail is presented in Appendix F, the Biological Resources Technical Report (BRTR).
A4-3	Section 4.3.1.5, *Biological Resources, Environmental setting of the SCE Calcite Facilities*, includes a discussion of the rare plant survey that was conducted. Occurrence of desert tortoise, and burrowing owl have been noted and are discussed throughout Section 4.3. Section 4.3.1.1 includes a discussion of the literature review conducted for Mohave ground squirrel. Mitigation is listed for desert kit fox and American badger in Section 4.3.4.
A4-4	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, includes an analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources that includes a discussion of potential impacts from lighting, noise, human activity, and wildlife-human interactions created by development projects. This section also includes potential indirect impacts on biological resources, an evaluation of impacts to adjacent open space lands. Section 4.3.5, *Cumulative Impacts*, includes all potential direct and indirect project related impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, etc.
A4-5	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, includes a suite of detailed mitigation measures that include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the Project.
A4-6	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resource,* includes a discussion of impacts to sensitive plant communities, along with measures to avoid and protect these communities.
A4-7	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, presents mitigation measures that address adverse Project-related impacts, and emphasize avoidance and reduction of project impacts, including compensation lands as mitigation for habitat loss.
A4-8	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, includes MM BIO-3d, Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy, which would reduce impacts to nesting birds.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
A4-9	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* includes MM BIO-1a: Biological Monitoring, which requires the applicant to assign a Lead Biologist to periodically inspect areas with high vehicle activity for animals in harm's way and relocate them if necessary.
A4-10	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* states that the applicant is required to obtain all necessary permits and approvals to impact nesting birds under the ESA, CESA, and MBTA. Refer to Appendix A for applicable regulations, policies, and standards.
A4-11	See Appendix A, *Regulations*, for information on the Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement.
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center	
A5-1	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* includes Mitigation Measure BIO-3c, Protect Desert Tortoise, which follows the requirements of the USFWS and CDFW.
CURE	
B1-1	The commenter requested that a mailed notice of the availability of any environmental review document be sent to the commenter. The commenter has been added to the mailing list for the Project.
B1-2	The commenter requested that a mailed notice of any and all hearings and/or actions related to the Project be sent to the commenter. The commenter has been added to the mailing list for the Project.
Saint Joseph Monastery	
B2-1	Section 4.1.3, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Impact Analysis*, discusses the Projects impacts on the visual character or quality of the public views of the site. Section 4.2, *Air Quality*, discusses air quality impacts during construction and operation of the Project and includes Mitigation Measure AQ-1, which mitigates the impacts of dust. Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, states that desert tortoise habitat would be removed where ground disturbance is required, but Mitigation Measure BIO-1g requires that habitat loss be compensated for with permanent preservation of equivalent lands elsewhere. Section 4.12.4, *Noise and Vibration, Environmental Impact Analysis* and Mitigation discusses the noise and vibration impacts associated with the Project. Section 4.17.4, *Traffic and Transportation, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation* discusses the impacts of the Project on traffic.
B2-2	Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, addresses conservation of wildlife corridors, habitat for the golden eagles, desert tortoises, and bighorn sheep, specifically within the Granite Mountain Wildlife Linkage ACEC.
B2-3	Section 4.11.4, *Land Use and Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis* addresses the potential for the community to be divided.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
Scenic 247 Committee	
B3-1	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247 and Lucerne Valley Cutoff. Section 4.1.3*, Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B3-2	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
B3-3	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare*, Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley. Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation* discusses the impacts to biological resources.
B3-4	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project, but it is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR.
B3-5	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B3-6	Section 4.16, *Recreation,* discusses the importance of SR-247 as an access point to recreational areas. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* addresses proximity to SR-247.
B3-7	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis,* explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B3-8	Section 4.14, *Population and Housing* includes a discussion of polices regarding development in the area. Section 4.14.*4 Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation*, discusses the impacts the Project could have on the population nearby.
B3-9	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. Rooftop solar located in areas other than the Mojave Desert is not analyzed; it does not meet the defined criteria for alternatives.
B3-10	Section 4.14, *Population and Housing* includes a discussion of polices regarding development in the area. Section 4.14.4*, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation* discusses the impacts the Project could have on the population nearby. Property values are not addressed under CEQA.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
Desert Tortoise Council	
B4-1	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The use of DFAs defined by the DRECP, or private lands such as North of Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, are discussed in Section 5.3.1, and 5.3.2. Rooftop solar located in areas other than the Mojave Desert is not analyzed; it does not meet the defined criteria for alternatives. Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* includes mitigation for vegetation management.
B4-2	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* discusses the result of surveys, and Appendix F (BRTR) includes details and findings of specific biological surveys, as well as methodologies and personnel.
B4-3	Section 2*, Project Description,* references power purchase agreements, but specific details are not available. Section 4.3.4.2 and 4.3.4.3, *Biological Resources* analyzes the impacts to desert tortoise of the Stagecoach Gen-tie Line and the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B4-4	Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open. Section 4.3.4.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis* discusses direct and indirect impacts to desert tortoise and its habitat, due to the presence of the Project as a potential blockage.
B4-5	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* addresses impacts to vegetation and wildlife habitats, including desert tortoise.
B4-6	Section 4.3.4.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis* states that implementation of mitigation measures as described for construction and Impact BIO-1a, would also avoid and minimize impacts from O&M, including those impacts to desert tortoise. Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open.
B4-7	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis* discusses impacts to plants due to construction and maintenance, and includes Mitigation Measure BIO-1e, Vegetation Management Plan, which discusses restoration strategies to habitats impacted by construction. Section 4.2.1, *Air Quality, Environmental Setting* discusses the presence of wind in the Project area, and mitigation for dust acknowledges that wind erosion is a factor.
B4-8	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* Impact BIO-5, discusses that by implementing Mitigation Measures for Impact BIO-1 ground disturbance and introduction of invasive or non-native species would be minimized. Section 4.18.6, *Wildfire, Mitigation Measure Summary,* lists mitigation measures that would reduce the risk of fire, and includes an expanded Fire Management and Prevention Plan.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B4-9	Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials,* states that the hazardous materials used in the battery system would include required secondary containment as per regulatory standards.
B4-10	Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* states that the solar generation facilities would have enclosures that will include suitable fire suppression equipment and gas detection and ventilation if deemed appropriate based on design specifications, per current California Fire Code. Section 4.18.6, *Wildfire, Mitigation Measure Summary,* lists mitigation measures that would reduce the risk of fire.
B4-11	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* Mitigation Measure BIO-3c would protect tortoises on and around roads. Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open.
B4-12	Section 4.3.6, *Biological Resources*, Table 4.3-2 (Impact and Mitigation Measure Summary), lists the recommended mitigation measures for biological impacts, which include success criteria and monitoring plans.
B4-13	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario*, presents a list of Cumulative Projects. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, includes Mitigation Measures BIO-3b (Relocate Special-Status Wildlife Species), which discusses translocation for desert tortoise.
B4-14	Section 1.5*, Agency Use of this Document*, defines the agencies with permitting jurisdiction for the Project.
B4-15	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* states that the desert tortoise is present on the site, and Appendix F, BRTR, includes more information regarding desert tortoise and completed surveys.
Mojave Desert Land Trust	
B5-1	Section 4.3.1.5, *Biological Resources* describes the southern end of the gen-tie line route as crosses private land adjacent to the Granite Mountain Wildlife Linkage ACEC (see Figure 4.3-6 Wildlife Movement). The gen-tie route is not on BLM land so is not subject to BLM ACEC management plans.
B5-2	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* discusses impacts to groundwater supply related to water use during construction. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
B5-3	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The use of DFAs defined by the DRECP, or private lands around Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, are discussed. Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting* (and Appendix F, BRTR) lists all plant and animal

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	species at the Project site, including special-status species. Section 4.3.4, *Environmental Impacts*, discusses impacts of the Project on the listed species.
Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association	
B6-1	See comment set B8.
B6-2	Section 2*, Project Description,* includes Section 2.2, *Project Objectives for Stagecoach Project*, which explains that the utility-scale Project is to assist California in meeting its obligations under the Renewable Portfolio Standard, and goals for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
B6-3	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light, and Glare*, Environmental Setting, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, Environmental Impact Analysis, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B6-4	Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts,* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Stagecoach Solar Generation Project. Additional development that may result from the presence of the SCE Calcite Facilities is discussed here.
B6-5	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* includes Mitigation Measure BIO-3c, Protect Desert Tortoise, which proposes to follow authorizations by USFWS and CDFW. Section 4.3.4 discusses the direct and indirect environmental impacts of the Project with respect to desert tortoise.
B6-6	Section 4.2.2, *Air Quality, Regulatory Setting,* discusses the dust emissions that would result from the Project and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would apply to the Project.
B6-7	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* discusses impacts to groundwater supply related to water use during construction. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
B6-8	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations,* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
B6-9	Section 4.11.1, *Land Use and Planning, Environmental Setting* explains the nearby businesses and residents, and their proximity to the Project. This section also explains that County zoning codes are not applicable to State lands.
Defenders of Wildlife	
B7-1	Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources*, *Environmental Setting of the Stagecoach Solar Generation Facilities*, lists all the species at the Project site (see also Appendix F, BRTR), and Section 4.3.4, Environmental Impact Analysis, analyzes the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the species listed.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B7-2	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The use of DFAs defined by the DRECP, or private lands near Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, are also addressed.
B7-3	Section 4.3.2, *Biological Resources, Regulatory Setting,* explains that the CSLC will coordinate with and follow the guidelines set by CDFW, and USFWS. The CSLC and CPUC are not participants in the planned MSHCP/HCCP, so the proposed solar facilities and gen-tie segments on State lands would not be subject to its terms or conditions when it becomes final. Private lands in the northern portions of the gen-tie route may be subject to the MSHCP/NCCP if it is finalized and adopted prior to any final approval of the Proposed Project, and if gen-tie construction would require a discretionary permit from a MSHCP/ NCCP permittee. Section 2*, Project Description* states that SCE would obtain the necessary permits or authorizations in consultation with USFWS, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and/or land management agencies.
Desert Tortoise Council	
B8-1	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project but is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Project. Additional development that may follow the development of the SCE Calcite Facilities is discussed here. Section 2*, Project Description* states that the SCE Calcite Facilities are evaluated as part of the project because it would be constructed specifically to allow the electricity generated by the Stagecoach Facilities to be interconnected to the proposed SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-2	Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, explains that the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project identified areas adjacent to the project area north in Stoddard Valley, east in the Ord Mountains, and south in the San Bernardino Mountains as Essential Connectivity Areas.
B8-3	See comment B7-3 above.
B8-4	See comment A1-3 above.
B8-5	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* explains that the density of structures in the Project vicinity is low, and residents are concentrated on the east side of the Project, and therefore the Project would not divide an established community.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B8-6	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light, and Glare*, Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 identify impacts that the Project would have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
B8-7	Section 2*, Project Description,* describes that the acreage for the Proposed Project is separate from the acreage and structures for the SCE Calcite Facilities. Section 2.3.1 explains the Stagecoach Project and Section 2.7.1 describes the SCE Calcite Facilities components.
B8-8	Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, states that the California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) Project identified areas adjacent to the project area north in Stoddard Valley, east in the Ord Mountains, and south in the San Bernardino Mountains as Essential Connectivity Areas. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* explains that the Project is proposed on State-owned lands, and therefore not under the jurisdiction of federal, county, and/or local policies. Section 4.16, *Recreation*, describes the four ACECs that surround the Project.
B8-9	Section 4.3.4.2, *Biological Resources, Stagecoach Gen-Tie Line*, discusses the impacts of the gen-tie line on biological resources. Section 4.1.3, *Aesthetics/Light, and Glare*, Environmental Impact Analysis, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B8-10	Section 2*, Project Description,* includes a description of the lands owned by State, and itemizes land proposed to be used for each purpose. Section 2.7.1 describes the land used for the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-11	Section 4 *Intro to Environmental Setting*, introduces the environmental baseline and setting, and the significance criteria. Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project but is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Project and the additional development that may follow the development of the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-12	Section 2*, Project Description*, describes the Stagecoach and Calcite Projects separately, and describes the other associated Projects that the SCE Calcite Facility may also serve. Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project but is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	Facilities' relationship to the Project and the potential that additional development may result from the development of the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-13	Section 4.11.2, *Land Use and Planning*, *Regulatory Setting,* explains that under the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, the land use category in the portion of the Lucerne Valley where the solar field is located, is designated as Resource/Land Management. Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project but is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Project and the potential that additional development may result from the development of the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-14	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community, including the economic welfare of the nearby community. Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open.
B8-15	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis,* under multiple impact headings discusses the direct and indirect impacts of ground disturbance on biological resources. Section 4.2.4.1, *Air Quality, Environmental Impact Analysis,* and Section 4.9.4.1 *(Hazards) both* discuss the potential exposure of sensitive receptors to Valley Fever. The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust are recommended as mitigation to minimize dust emissions and therefore prevent the spread of Valley Fever.
B8-16	Section 4.16*, Recreation* explains that the Project would not block OHV routes because there are none designated on State or private lands. Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open.
B8-17	Section 4.3.2, Biological Resources, Regulatory Setting, explains that the CSLC will coordinate with and follow the guidelines set by CDFW, and USFWS. The CSLC is not participants in the planned MSHCP/HCCP. As a result, the proposed solar facilities and gen-tie segments on State lands would not be subject to its terms or conditions. Private lands in the northern portions of the gen-tie route may be subject to the MSHCP/NCCP if it is finalized and adopted prior to any final approval of the Proposed Project, and if gen-tie construction would require a discretionary permit from a MSHCP/ NCCP permittee.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B8-18	Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* explains that control of wind-driven soil erosion that causes blowing dust would be governed by Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District fugitive dust rules, which would require stringent dust control measures. These requirements would be supplemented by Mitigation Measure AQ-1. Section 4.2.2, *Air Quality, Regulatory Setting,* discusses the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would apply to the Project. Section 4.3.4*, Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, discusses project impacts to special status species.
B8-19	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* address potential impacts to bird and bat species. Section 4.12.4, *Noise and Vibration, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation* discusses the noise and vibration impacts associated with the Project.
B8-20	Section 4.3.4.3, *Biological Resources, SCE Calcite Facilities* includes a discussion of impacts to biological resources in relation to the Calcite Facilities. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Project and explains that additional development may follow the construction of the SCE Calcite Facilities.
B8-21	Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* discusses the control of wind-driven erosion that causes blowing dust would be governed by Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District fugitive dust rules, which would require stringent dust control measures. These requirements would be supplemented by Mitigation Measure AQ-1. Impact GEO-5 discusses impacts of the Project on soil erosion in the context of ground disturbing activities. Section 4.2.4, *Air Quality Environmental Impact Analysis,* discusses the potential exposure of sensitive receptors to Valley Fever, and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would help prevent dust emissions and therefore the spread of Valley Fever. Valley Fever and its effects on human health is discussed under Impact HAZ-4 in Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*. Section 4.3.4*, Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis,* under multiple impact headings discusses the direct and indirect impacts of ground disturbance on biological resources.
B8-22	Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, under multiple impact headings discusses the direct and indirect impacts of ground disturbance on biological resources. Section 4.7.1.1 (Geology and Soils) addresses the potential presence of cryptogamic soil crusts.
B8-23	Section 4.2.4, *Air Quality, Environmental Impact Analysis,* discusses the potential exposure of sensitive receptors to Valley Fever, and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would help prevent dust emissions and therefore the spread of Valley Fever. Valley Fever and its effects on human health is discussed under Impact HAZ-4 in Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*.
B8-24	See B8-23.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B8-25	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare*, Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project would have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley. This section provides visual photosimulations to demonstrate the visual impacts, instead of elevation diagrams. Section 4.1.3, Environmental Impact Analysis, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is currently not a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B8-26	Section 4.17, *Traffic and Transportation,* Impact TRA-1 discusses traffic impacts relating to traffic volumes and safety and presents detailed mitigation measures. Impact TRA-3 discusses impacts relating to roadway damage.
B8-27	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light, and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis,* explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway*.*
B8-28	Section 4.11.2, *Land Use and Planning, Regulatory Setting,* explains the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, and the Renewable Energy and Conservation Element, and why the Solar Generation Facilities do not fall under the jurisdiction of these policies.
B8-29	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning,* explains the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, and why the Solar Generation Facilities is not under the jurisdiction of this plan. This section also addresses the County Development Code, which states that the CPUC has jurisdiction over transmission lines, but not over private power generation interconnection facilities.
B8-30	See comment A1-3 above.
B8-31	Section 4.3.2, *Biological Resources, Regulatory Setting*, states that the CSLC will coordinate with and follow the guidelines set by CDFW, and USFWS. The CSLC and CPUC are not participants in the planned MSHCP/HCCP. Private lands in the northern portions of the gen-tie route may be subject to the MSHCP/NCCP if it is finalized and adopted prior to any final approval of the Proposed Project, and if gen-tie construction would require a discretionary permit from a MSHCP/ NCCP permittee.
B8-32	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* does not mention the California Protected Areas Database (CPAD)
B8-33	Section 2*.3.3.9, Project Description, Solar Generation Facilities Site Restoration,* discusses how disturbed areas would be restored. Section 4.0, *Environmental Setting and Analysis*, presents an introduction to how the environmental issues would be analyzed in the EIR, including Significant and Unavoidable impacts.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B8-34	No portion of the Proposed Project would be located on BLM-administered federal lands, so the DRECP would not apply. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* explains that the Project is not under the jurisdiction of plans or policies governing use of federal lands.
B8-35	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* discusses impacts to groundwater supply related to water use during construction. More detailed information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
B8-36	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* states that all the drainage that affects the Proposed Project site is ephemeral. Runoff is activated by rainfall only, and typical of desert washes, rainfall is of short duration. These types of drainages are described in Section 4.10.4, *Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation*. Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* analyzes impacts to streams under Impact BIO-7.
B8-37	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* includes a discussion of the nearby residences, and Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* includes a discussion of potential cumulative development within Lucerne Valley Communities.
B8-38	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community, including the potential benefits, economic welfare, health, and wellbeing, of the nearby community. Section 3 presents the *Cumulative Scenario*, and cumulative impacts of the Project are defined for each resource in Chapter 4.
B8-39	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* includes Mitigation Measure BIO-1e, Revegetation, which discusses restoration strategies to habitats impacted by construction. Section 2*.3.3.9, Project Description, Solar Generation Facilities Site Restoration,* discusses how the Applicant proposes to restore disturbed areas after construction.
B8-40	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis,* includes Section 5.9 which is the No Project Alternative. The “no project” analysis addresses the environmental benefits of not building the project.
B8-41	Section 4.5, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, explains that the CSLC contacted the NAHC to obtain information about known cultural and Tribal cultural resources and request a list of Native American Tribal representatives and sent project notification letters and an invitation to consult under AB 52 to the Director of Cultural Resources of the one tribe that had previously requested notification. Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, Explains that two separate survey efforts were completed for the solar generation facilities. Pedestrian field surveys in July and October 2017, and a supplemental intensive pedestrian field survey was completed in May 2020. Field surveys were conducted in order to verify the location of any previously identified cultural resources and to inspect previously unsurveyed lands for resources within the Proposed Project (Appendix G).and Section 4.13.4, *Paleontological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis* discusses the impact

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	assessment methodology for the section, and explains that the impact analysis has been based on the geologic formations present, knowledge of the paleoenvironment of those formations, and the locations and paleoenvironments of known fossil localities of the age in the region.
B8-42	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light, and Glare*, Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, and Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations,* address the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community, including the economic welfare of the nearby community.
B8-43	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* SC Wildlands' Letter Commenting on the DEIR for the Proposed Ord Mountain Solar Project 11/16/18 (See revised Letter dated 11/13/20, comment letter B9)
B8-44	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* SC Wildlands' Letter Commenting on the Draft EIS/EIR for the DRECP 02/19/15
B8-45	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* SC Wildlands' Report for the Alliance for Desert Preservation 02/23/15
B8-46	See comment B9
SC Wildlands	
B9-1	See B8-31
B9-2	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* addresses impacts to creosote brush habitat and presents a restoration requirement.
B9-3	See B8-31. Also, Section 4.3.1.5, *Biological Resources* explains that the southern end of the gen-tie line route crosses private land that is adjacent to the Granite Mountain Wildlife Linkage ACEC (see Figure 4.3-6 Wildlife Movement). No part of the proposed gen-tie route is subject to BLM ACEC management.
B9-4	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, Environmental Setting, and Appendix F (BRTR) include a list of all species in the Project area, and Impact BIO-4 discusses the potential impacts to birds.
B9-5	Section 4.3.5, *Biological Resources, Cumulative Impacts* addresses habitat connectivity and wildlife movement corridors in a cumulative setting, and Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis,* provides and in-depth analysis of alternatives, including a discussion of which alternatives were chosen for consideration, and why.
B9-6	See B8-31. Also, Section 4.3.1.5, *Biological Resources* explains that the southern end of the gen-tie line route crosses private land that is adjacent to the Granite Mountain Wildlife Linkage ACEC (see Figure 4.3-6 Wildlife Movement). No part of the proposed gen-tie route is subject to BLM ACEC management.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
Morongo Basin Conservation Association	
B10-1	Section 2*, Project Description* describes each project component and its disturbance footprint (Table 2-1).
B10-2	Section 4, *Introduction to Environmental Setting*, introduces the environmental baseline and setting, and the significance criteria used for the Projects impact analysis. It also describes the approach to cumulative impacts analysis. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Solar Generation Facilities. Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* explains that the proposed SCE Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project but is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since they would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR.
B10-3	Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, explains that the California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) Project identified areas adjacent to the project area north in Stoddard Valley, east in the Ord Mountains, and south in the San Bernardino Mountains as Essential Connectivity Areas.
B10-4	Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* includes Impact GEO-5, which discusses impacts of the Project on soil erosion in the context of ground disturbing activities. This section does not quantify the amount of ground disturbance that would occur for the Project construction or decommissioning. Section 4.3.4, *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis*, under multiple impact headings discusses the direct and indirect impacts of ground disturbance on biological resources. Section 4.2.4, *Air Quality, Environmental Impact Analysis,* discusses the potential exposure of sensitive receptors to Valley Fever, and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would help prevent dust emissions and therefore the spread of Valley Fever. Valley Fever and its effects on human health are discussed under Impact HAZ-4 in Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*.
B10-5	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway.
B10-6	Section 4.11.2, *Land Use and Planning, Regulatory Setting,* explains the San Bernardino Countywide Plan, and the Renewable Energy and Conservation Element, and why the State-owned lands are not controlled by these policies.
B10-7	See B10-6.
B10-8	See B8-31.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
B10-9	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* does not mention the compatibility of the Project with The California Protected Areas Database (CPAD).
B10-10	Section 4, *Environmental Setting and Analysis*, explains how the environmental issues are analyzed in the EIR, including significance determinations.
B10-11	Section 2*, Project Description,* does not talk about the DRECP because none of the Proposed Project is on BLM land*.* Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* references County policy RE 5.4.2 which encourages utility oriented RE generation to occur in the five preferred development areas. However, County policies are not applicable to State-owned lands.
B10-12	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality,* discusses impacts to groundwater supply related to water use during construction. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
B10-13	Section 4.10.1, *Hydrology and Water Quality, Environmental Setting,* specifically Impact HWQ-1, includes a description of surface water in the Project area.
B10-14	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* describes and lists nearby residences, and Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario*, includes a discussion of potential cumulative development within Lucerne Valley Communities.
B10-15	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby communities.
B10-16	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* includes Mitigation Measure BIO-1e, Revegetation, which discusses restoration strategies to habitats impacted by construction. and Section 2*, Project Description* describes the Applicant's commitment to restore temporarily disturbed areas.
B10-17	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis,* provides and in-depth analysis of alternatives, including a discussion of which alternatives were chosen for consideration, and why. Section 5.9 provides a discussion of the "No Project" alternative.
B10-18	Section 4.5, *Tribal Cultural Resources*, explains that the CSLC contacted the NAHC to obtain information about known cultural and Tribal cultural resources and request a list of Native American Tribal representatives and sent project notification letters and an invitation to consult under AB 52 to the Director of Cultural Resources of the one tribe that had previously requested notification. Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, Explains that two separate survey efforts were completed for the solar generation facilities. Pedestrian field surveys in July and October 2017, and a supplemental intensive pedestrian field survey was completed in May 2020. Field surveys were conducted in order to verify the location of any previously identified cultural resources and to inspect previously unsurveyed lands for resources within the Proposed Project (Appendix G).and Section 4.13.4, *Paleontological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis* discusses the impact assessment methodology for the section, and explains that the impact analysis has been

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	based on the geologic formations present, knowledge of the paleoenvironment of those formations, and the locations and paleoenvironments of known fossil localities of the age in the region.
B10-19	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby communities.
B10-20	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* includes Mitigation Measure BIO-3c (Protect Desert Tortoise), which is requires actions authorized by USFWS and CDFW.
B10-21	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions which includes development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity into account to determine the total GHG emissions due to construction and operation.
B10-22	Executive Order N-82-20 is not specifically addressed, but the full range of impacts to biological resources is addressed in Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*.
B10-23	See Comment Sets B8 and E4.
B10-24	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions which addresses development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity to account to determine the total GHG emissions due to construction and operation.
B10-25	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
B10-26	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions which addresses development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity to account to determine the total GHG emissions due to construction and operation.
B10-27	Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* includes Impact GEO-5, which discusses impacts of the Project on soil erosion in the context of ground disturbing activities and consideration of cryptogamic soil crusts.
B10-28	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions which addresses development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity to account to determine the total GHG emissions due to construction and operation.
B10-29	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions which addresses development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity to account to determine the total GHG emissions due to construction and operation.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
Brad Hicks	
E1-1	This comment expresses opposition to industrial scale solar in the Lucerne Valley.
Bill Lembright	
E2-1	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway. Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
E2-2	Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources* includes an assessment of flora and fauna in the Project footprint, identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their habitats. Figures 4.3-3 and 4.3-4 identify special status plants and animals in the Project footprint. Section 4.3.1.3 also includes an assessment of the various habitat types located within the Project footprint, and Figure 4.3-5 identifies the location of each habitat type
E2-3	Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, and Appendix G (Cultural Resources) explains that survey efforts that were completed for the solar generation facilities and the gen-tie line.
E2-4	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, under impact BIO-1A states that compacting, grading, or removing topsoil would affect nutrients or mycorrhizae necessary for the health, growth, and reproduction of plants. Section 4.2.2*, Air Quality, Regulatory Setting,* discusses the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would apply to the Project and presents detailed mitigation measures.
E2-5	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
E2-6	Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* includes Impact HAZ-1, which discusses battery safety.
E2-7	Section 4.3.4.2, *Biological Resources*, *Stagecoach Gen-Tie Line* discusses the impacts of soil disturbance along the gen-tie line. Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway. Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley. Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
E2-8	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* explains that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project, but it is also evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR.
E2-9	Section 4.7, *Geology and Soils* includes Impact GEO-5, which discusses impacts of the Project on soil erosion in the context of ground disturbing activities. Section 4.2.2, *Air Quality, Regulatory Setting*, discusses the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would apply to the Project, and Section 4.3, *Biological Resources* addresses the loss of plants that would result from Project construction. Table 4.3-1 (Direct Impacts to Vegetation, Cover Types, and Jurisdictional Waters) presents the acreage of effect for each project component to each habitat or resource type.
E2-10	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare* (Subsections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5) describe the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
E2-11	Section 4.10.1, *Hydrology and Water Quality, Environmental Setting,* discusses groundwater availability and use. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D. Section 2.3.1*, Project Description, Project Overview,* describes that either permanent groundwater wells, or an onsite water tank would be used for O&M. Section 2.4.5.3 explains construction demand for water and the water source.
E2-12	Section 4.10.1, *Hydrology and Water Quality, Environmental Setting,* Impact HWQ-3B, discusses the potential project impacts on flooding. Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 is recommended to ensure that a site drainage study address potential flooding issues as described under Impact HWQ-3.
E2-13	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts that the Project may have on the nearby community.
E2-14	Section 5, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis* discusses the alternatives to the Project. The depth in which the alternatives are analyzed is determined by the lead agency. The use of DFAs and the areas of Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy, are discussed in this section.
Neil Nadler	
E3-1	See E2-14.
E3-2	See comments A2-1 through A2-6.
E3-3	Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, states that the California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) Project identified areas adjacent to the project area north in Stoddard Valley, east in the Ord Mountains, and south in the San Bernardino Mountains as Essential

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	Connectivity Areas. Other important linkages related to desert tortoise are discussed in Section 4.3.1.3.
Brian and Sue Hammer	
E4-1	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
E4-2	Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/ Light and Glare*, Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5, describes the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
E4-3	Section 4.2.2, *Air Quality, Regulatory Setting*, discusses the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust that would apply to the Project, and Section 4.2.3 recommends detailed mitigation measures to control dust.
E4-4	Section 4.10.1, *Hydrology and Water Quality, Environmental Setting,* discusses groundwater availability and use. More information is included in the Water Supply Assessment, included in Appendix D.
E4-5	Section 4.8, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, Impact GHG-1 includes a comprehensive analysis of GHG emissions, which considers development activities, emissions due to land use conversion, emissions avoided by producing electricity to determine the total project GHG emissions.
E4-6	See E4-5.
E4-7	Section 4.17*, Transportation and Traffic,* presents Mitigation Measure TRA-1 which would control traffic on Lucerne Valley Cutoff and SR-247, which would ensure that access between recreational areas stays open. Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
E4-8	Section 4.12.4, *Noise and Vibration, Environmental Impact Analysis* and Mitigation discusses the noise and vibration impacts associated with the Project.
E4-9	Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* includes a discussion about the RECE in the San Bernardino General Plan.
E4-10	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway. Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
E4-11	See B8-31. Section 4.3.1, *Biological Resources, Environmental Setting*, states that the California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) Project identified areas adjacent to the project area north in Stoddard Valley, east in the Ord Mountains, and south in the San Bernardino Mountains as Essential Connectivity Areas. Other important linkages related to desert tortoise are discussed in Section 4.3.1.3. Section 4.3.1.3, *Biological Resources* includes

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
	an assessment of flora and fauna in the Project footprint, identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their habitats. Figures 4.3-3 and 4.3-4 identify special status plants and animals in the Project footprint.
E4-12	Section 4.1.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Setting*, discusses the viewer concern for travelers on SR-247. Section 4.1.3, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, explains that although SR-247 is eligible for state designation, it is not currently a State-Designated Scenic Highway. Sections 4.1.3.3, 4.1.3.4, and 4.1.3.5 discuss the impacts that the Project will have on the natural landscape of Lucerne Valley.
E4-13	Section 4.3.4 *Biological Resources, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation* includes Table 4.3-1, which presents the acreage of effect for each project component to each habitat or resource type.
E4-14	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, Impact BIO-3 address potential effects on birds and includes Mitigation Measures BIO-3f (Bird and Bat Protection).
E4-15	Section 8.1, *Environmental Justice Considerations* discusses the impacts the Project may have on the nearby community.
E4-16	Section 4.11.4, *Land Use and Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis,* describes the effect of the Project on the nearby residences, and explains that the Project would not divide an established community.
E4-17	Section 4.2.4, *Air Quality, Environmental Impact Analysis*, discusses the potential exposure of sensitive receptors to Valley Fever, and the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District's Rules for visible emissions, nuisance, and fugitive dust. These rules and implementation of recommended dust control mitigation would minimize dust emissions and therefore the spread of Valley Fever. Valley Fever and its effects on human health is discussed under Impact HAZ-4 in Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*.
E4-18	Section 4.9, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* states that the solar generation facilities would have enclosures that will include suitable fire suppression equipment and gas detection and ventilation if deemed appropriate based on design specifications, per current California Fire Code. Section 4.18.6, *Wildfire, Mitigation Measure Summary,* lists mitigation measures that would reduce the risk of fire, applicable to both the solar generation facilities and the gen-tie line.
E4-19	Section 4.7.1.1, *Geology and Soils, Regional Geologic Setting*, discusses the regional seismic setting. Table 4.7-2 lists the significant active and potentially active faults in the Project vicinity. Impacts GEO-3 and GEO-4 both discuss impacts related to seismic phenomena.
E4-20	See Section 4.1, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare*, for a discussion of the effects of the Project on open space.

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Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
E4-21	Section 4.1.3, *Aesthetics/Light and Glare, Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures,* discusses impacts of glare, and how the effective implementation of Mitigation Measure ALG-6a (Minimize night lighting at project facilities) would reduce that effect.
E4-22	Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality* addresses concerns related to grading and impacts on surface and groundwater.
E4-23	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources,* Impact BIO-6 discusses that State jurisdictional stream channels in the Proposed Project area convey water, sediment, and nutrients downstream to other habitats, and may support habitat for wetland species. Construction would directly and indirectly impact jurisdictional waters along ephemeral and sparsely vegetated washes. Section 4.10, *Hydrology and Water Quality* includes Mitigation Measure HWQ-1 which requires the Applicant to submit a Drainage Plan for managing stormwater during Project construction and operations.
E4-24	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario,* states that the proposed Calcite Facilities are identified as a cumulative project, but it is evaluated as part of the Proposed Project since it would be needed to deliver the generated solar power to the electrical transmission grid. The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR. Section 6.1, *Growth-Inducing Impacts* discusses the SCE Calcite Facilities' relationship to the Project and considers the potential for additional development after construction of Calcite.
E4-25	Section 5.9, *Alternatives Screening, Identification, and Impact Analysis, No Project Alternative,* addresses the "No Project" alternative.
E4-26	Section 2*, Project Description,* does not address the DRECP, as no part of the Proposed Project would be on BLM-administered federal lands. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* explains County Policy RE 5.4.2, which encourages utility oriented renewable energy generation to occur in five specific areas, but it notes that County policies are not applicable since the Project would be on State-owned land.
E4-27	Section 3, *Cumulative Scenario*, presents a list of Cumulative Projects The cumulative impact analyses are included in the individual environmental resource sections provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.18 of this EIR.
Tina Eyraud	
E5-1	Section 4.14, *Population and Housing*, discusses the creation of jobs in the Project area and the possibility of the Project attracting people to the community. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning,* describes the use of land for the Project and the existing land uses surrounding the Project.
E5-2	Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, discusses the species present in the Project area, the methods used to survey the area, and the potential impacts to these species.

Table C-2. Index to Public Scoping Comments

Comment #	Location Where Comment is Addressed in EIR
E5-3	The Project Description (Sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.4) describe the proposed gen-tie line and its construction. Section 4.11, *Land Use and Planning* discusses the use of easements on private property for power poles. Permits for geotechnical investigation along the gen-tie line route would be issued by the County, and geotechnical investigations on the State lease are permitted by the CSLC.

Appendix C.2

Public Scoping Comments

Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department

385 N. Arrowhead Ave, First Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415 | Phone: 909.387.8311 Fax: 909.387.3223
www.SBCounty.gov

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

Land Use Services Department
Planning

Terri Rahhal
Director

November 6, 2020

Sarah Mongano
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825

Sent via email: CEQAcomments@slc.ca.gov

RE: Notice of Preparation for the Stagecoach Solar Project in Lucerne Valley

Dear Ms. Mongano:

This letter responds to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Stagecoach Solar Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on behalf of the Land Use Services Department of San Bernardino County. The NOP describes a large utility-scale solar project on approximately 3,000 acres of State-owned land northwest of the unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley, with a 9.1 mile 220 kV transmission line to connect the project to the Southern California Edison Calcite Substation.

The description of the project in the NOP is not adequate for the County to determine the scope of the project and comment fully on the appropriate scope of the EIR. Please respond to our comments on the project description as soon as possible. Upon learning more detail of the project plans, we may submit supplemental comments on the project and the scope of the EIR analysis. **A1-1**

Project Description: The project description in the NOP refers to a 3,000-acre project area on state lands, but it also mentions 640 acres of adjacent private lands owned by Aurora Solar, LLC as being encompassed in the project boundary. The project description and map attached to the NOP are inexact. The 640 acres of private land must be Section 1 of Township 6N, Range 2W (APN 0464-051-07). However, that property doesn't appear to be part of the project site depicted on Figure 1 of the NOP. Please provide a scaled map of the project site, with assessor parcel numbers, indicating the limits of proposed development. If the private land is proposed to be developed with solar arrays, an application to the County will be required for approval as a separate project. In addition to defining the main project site, please provide details of the location of off-site improvements that will require permits from the County. **A1-2**

Land Use Impacts: The County has adopted policies for the siting and development of renewable energy generation projects in the Renewable Energy and Conservation Element of the General Plan, now incorporated in the Countywide Plan. Policy RE 4.10 prohibits development of renewable energy projects on sites that may impact the quality of life or economic development opportunities of existing communities. More specifically, Policy RE 4.10 prohibits utility-oriented energy projects in certain community planning areas, including the planning area established for Lucerne Valley, which includes the project site. Development of the proposed project would clearly conflict with County policy RE 4.10. **A1-3**

Habitat Planning: Another land use impact threshold that must be addressed in the EIR is potential conflict with the draft MSHCP/NCCP being finalized by the Town of Apple Valley. The County is a partner in this habitat conservation plan, which covers a large unincorporated area that includes the project site. Potential impacts on sensitive species, wildlife movement corridors and general open space conservation at a landscape level should be analyzed in the EIR, with a specific focus on compatibility or conflict with the draft MSHCP/NCCP. **A1-4**

Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department (cont.)

Response to NOP for Stagecoach Solar Project in Lucerne Valley
November 6, 2020
PAGE **2** of **3**

Visual Impacts: State Route (SR) 247, also known as Old Woman Springs Road/Barstow Road, is identified as a scenic route in the County, from the Town of Yucca Valley to Barstow. A group of County residents has formed an independent Scenic Highway 247 Committee to seek designation of SR 247 as a State Scenic Highway. The visual assessment is posted on the web site www.scenichighway247.com. Outreach to the Scenic Highway 247 Committee will be essential to preparation of the visual impact analysis for the proposed project. The work the committee has completed to date sets a high standard for evaluation of existing scenic values and identification of intrusions. The visual impact analysis in the EIR should focus on views from SR 247. Scenic resources along this highway are extremely important to County residents, especially views of undisturbed natural open space. The impact analysis must reflect this local priority. **A1-5**

Air Quality Impacts: Blowing sand and dust is a constant concern impacting air quality, visibility and public health in Lucerne Valley. Dust control and management plans for the project are critical, not only during construction, but on an on-going basis. Dust control mitigation monitoring must be proactive, focused on prevention, and managed in a way that will not rely on community complaints to the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District or San Bernardino County Code Enforcement to discover and respond to a problem. Excessive water use is not an option in this region, due to water supply concerns. **A1-6**

Water Supply: The project EIR should address impacts to groundwater supply, especially related to water use during construction. A water supply assessment will be required. Dust control is paramount to any land disturbance in Lucerne Valley, but water conservation is also critical and water loss to evaporation through spraying must be minimized. **A1-7**

Soils stability: The primary issue of concern for air quality on the project is blowing dust and sand. Stable desert soils have a crust that once disturbed, may take many years to re-establish. Without a stable crust, erosion hazards increase, with potential impacts on other properties downwind and downstream. Potential impacts of soil erosion, including deposition of blowing sand should be analyzed in the EIR. The mitigation program should include measures to prevent and minimize the impacts of erosion. **A1-8**

Decommissioning: The County requires decommissioning of renewable energy generation facilities to return the site to a stable condition, similar to or better than the pre-development condition of the site. Our model for these standards comes from surface mining reclamation requirements. The decommissioning plan must include a plan for restoration of the site, including revegetation with native plants, as appropriate, and provisions for survival monitoring and plant replacement, if needed. Financial securities to guarantee decommissioning and site restoration according to the decommissioning plan will be essential to mitigate potential long-term impacts of the project in the event of future abandonment or closure. **A1-9**

Growth-Inducing Impacts: The relationship of the Calcite substation to the project should be clarified in the project description; as well as the anticipated approval authority and timing for improvement of the substation. Several solar energy project applications in the Lucerne Valley community planning area were accepted by the County before policy RE 4.10 was adopted. These projects are considered grandfathered in for completion of the review process, but their planning and environmental analysis activities have not progressed. The potential facilitation of other renewable energy projects that would not be feasible without the Calcite substation should be analyzed in the EIR as a growth-inducing impact of the project. Likewise, all of the direct impacts of the project should be analyzed on a cumulative level, considering the additional development likely to proceed from improvement of the Calcite substation. **A1-10**

Alternatives Analysis: Given the apparent significance of impacts noted in this letter, including basic conflicts with County land use policies, the alternatives analysis should include project-level analysis of alternative sites, sufficient to allow selection of an alternative site as the preferred project alternative. We recommend that strong consideration be given to the renewable energy development focus areas supported by the County Board of Supervisors in Resolution No. 2016-20, posted on the County web site at: http://cms.sbcounty.gov/lus/Planning/RenewableEnergy.aspx. In addition to these focus areas, the siting criteria noted in County Policy RE 5.2 should be used to evaluate the proposed project site in **A1-11**

Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Land Use Services Department (cont.)

comparison to alternative sites. Policy RE 5.2 emphasizes the importance of selecting disturbed lands, such as sites that have been utilized for agriculture or mining. **A1-11 cont.**

Thank you for providing the NOP for review and comment. We look forward to reviewing a more detailed project description, including identification of the parcels comprising the project site and specific identification of any permits to be sought from the County. Please provide this information as soon as possible, by e-mail to the following individuals. The notice of availability of the Draft EIR should also be sent to this distribution. **A1-12**

heidi.duron@lus.sbcounty.gov
karen.watkins@lus.sbcounty.gov
george.kenline@lus.sbcounty.gov

Sincerely,

Terri Rahhal

Terri Rahhal, Land Use Services Director

c: Heidi Duron, Planning Director
Karen Watkins, Planning Manager
George Kenline, Environmental Compliance Manager

Comment Set A2 – San Bernardino County Supervisors Robert Lovingood and Dawn Rowe

sbcounty.gov/bosD3

Dawn ROWE
THIRD DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

County of San Bernardino

November 12, 2020

Sarah Mongano
Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Ms. Mongano,

As members of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, we write to express our concern and opposition to the proposed Stagecoach Solar Project (Project) in the unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley. It is our understanding that this project will be sited on undeveloped state property, and the California State Lands Commission (CSLC) will serve as the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This letter is submitted in response to the CSLC solicitation for public and agency comments as to the scope and content of the environmental analysis. **A2-1**

Renewable energy development has been a major issue in San Bernardino County for over a decade. After a three-year public process which relied heavily on stakeholder input from our communities, the Board of Supervisors on August 8, 2017, adopted a Renewable Energy and Conservation Element (RECE) into our General Plan, incorporating our citizens' vision for renewable energy development in San Bernardino County policies.

In 2019, the Board of Supervisors adopted Policy 4.10 into the RECE. Under the provisions of this policy, development of utility-scale renewable energy projects within Community Planning areas is prohibited. The proposed location of the Project is in direct conflict with this established land use policy in San Bernardino County, as it would be developed in the Lucerne Valley Community Planning Area. We request that CSLC take into account this significant conflict when conducting the CEQA environmental analysis for the Project.

We were dismayed to learn that the Project will interfere with critical wildlife linkages identified in a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) for the Town of Apple Valley. The MSHCP Plan Area is strategically located at the intersection of three important wildlife linkages that are not only important to the immediate region, but also to the Mojave Desert as a whole. The identification and protection of these linkages will facilitate wildlife movement and gene flow across a wider regional landscape, making the entire region more resilient to the effects of climate change by ensuring the long-term viability of six Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. **A2-2**

The proposed project site is also problematic for the designation of State Route 247 (SR-247) as a State Scenic Highway by the California Department of Transportation. The close proximity of the Project to SR-247 disturbs the iconic viewshed of Lucerne Valley and jeopardizes efforts to obtain this highly coveted designation. This undertaking is a critical priority for Lucerne Valley and residents in nearby desert communities, thus the proposed location of this project will receive considerable backlash from our constituents if it moves forward as intended. **A2-3**

Comment Set A2 – San Bernardino County Supervisors Robert Lovingood and Dawn Rowe (cont.)

We also cannot overlook our citizens' concerns about visual impacts of renewable energy development on rural communities. The scenic quality of desert open space attracts highly valued tourism and contributes greatly to the quality of life in our desert communities. It is essential that this quality is considered by CSLC during the project review and decision process. **A2-4**

It is important to note that the County does support the development of utility-oriented renewable energy projects in defined areas. The Board of Supervisors adopted in RECE Policy 5.4.2 the following: "Encourage utility-oriented RE generation to occur in the five Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) Development Focus Areas (DFAs) that were supported by the Board of Supervisors on February 17, 2016, Resolution No. 2016-20 and on adjacent private lands (North of Kramer Junction, Trona, Hinkley, El Mirage, and Amboy)." These defined areas were determined through a meticulous process undertaken by the County of San Bernardino, taking into consideration our stakeholder input and citizens' vision for renewable energy development. **A2-5**

The proposed Project conflicts with our County's current land use policies, would interfere with critical wildlife linkages, and significantly impacts the viewshed of the unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley. For these reasons, we cannot support the application submitted by Aurora Solar, LLC and respectfully request that it be withdrawn. If the CSLC and/or project applicant are interested in exploring alternative options within San Bernardino County that meet our policy requirements, our county staff will gladly assist with identifying locations that are suitable for this type of development. **A2-6**

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on this project. We look forward to receiving a response to our comments.

Sincerely,

Dawn Rowe
3rd District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino

Robert A. Lovingood
1st District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino

CC: Paul Cook, Congressman, 8th District of California
Jay Obernolte, State Assemblyman, 33rd State Assembly District
Shannon Grove, State Senator, 16th State Senate District

Comment Set A3 – Town of Apple Valley

Town of Apple Valley

Better Way of Life

November 13, 2020

Sarah Mongano, Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825

RE: Stagecoach Solar Project NOP

Dear Ms. Mongano,

The Town of Apple Valley (Town) and San Bernardino County (County) are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to complete a Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (MSHCP/NCCP or Plan). The Town is the Lead Agency for this planning effort. The MSHCP/NCCP Plan Area is approximately 222,369 acres and it encompasses private lands under the Town and County's jurisdiction, as well as federal and state lands within the Plan's boundaries. The proposed Stagecoach Solar Project (proposed project), is located within the MSHCP/NCCP Plan Area and within the Plan's Linkage Design.[1] A3-1

The MSHCP/NCCP's Linkage Design is comprised of three landscape-level linkages that traverse the Plan Area. The preservation of these landscape-level linkages is critical for conservation and will benefit both the Victor Valley and West Mojave regions by maintaining connectivity for plant and wildlife species and aiding in their adaptation to climate change.

The Town and County have significant concerns regarding Stagecoach Solar's impacts on the MSHCP/NCCP planning effort because it is located in the landscape-level linkage identified in Upper Lucerne Valley. As the Lead Agency, the Town has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project and has identified the following issues that need to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR):

[1] Under the MSHCP/NCCP, the term Linkage Design is synonymous with the terms "Reserve Design" or "Conservation Area" used in other conservation plans.

Comment Set A3 – Town of Apple Valley (cont.)

Environmental Impacts to Upper Lucerne Valley

A3-2

The proposed Stagecoach Solar Project is located in Upper Lucerne Valley, which is an important part of the MSHCP/NCCP's Wild Wash Linkage. Upper Lucerne Valley contains large continuous tracts of intact habitat that is highly suitable for desert tortoise and is adjacent to the Ord-Rodman Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a desert tortoise critical habitat unit (CHU). In addition, Upper Lucerne Valley has also been identified as an important landscape-level linkage area (e.g., desert tortoise and bighorn sheep) and as an important habitat area for other desert scrub dependent species (e.g., burrowing owl, desert kit fox, and golden eagle).

In addition to impacts on the linkage through Upper Lucerne Valley, the USFWS has identified that the desert tortoise habitat within this area is important to the continued viability of the neighboring Ord-Rodman CHU. In 2013, USFWS prepared the *Desert Tortoise Linkage Evaluations Report – Ord-Rodman Linkages*[2] for the DRECP planning effort. This report indicated that impacts to desert tortoise habitat within Upper Lucerne Valley could have a detrimental effect on the long-term functioning of the Ord-Rodman CHU. The USFWS recommended any project considered in this location:

> *"must perform an analysis of effects on connectivity and effects on population viability within the Ord-Rodman Desert Wildlife Management Area [ACEC]. Projects that cannot show sufficient mitigation on their impacts on these factors are prohibited."*

Based on figures provided in the NOP and shown at the public scoping session, the proposed project's location roughly spans the entire width of the valley floor within Upper Lucerne Valley, effectively cutting off an important landscape-level linkage. The proposed project also includes Southern California Edison's proposed Calcite substation and several miles of transmission lines, which are also within, or directly adjacent to, the MSHCP/NCCP Plan Area. Therefore, the environmental documents prepared for the proposed project **must fully evaluate** the effect that Stagecoach Solar, Calcite substation, and the associated transmission lines will have on:

- The landscape-level linkage through Upper Lucerne Valley, connectivity of species populations, and the continued permeability of surrounding federal lands;
- Species that are likely to be present within and adjacent to the proposed project, including desert tortoise, burrowing owl, desert kit fox, Mojave monkeyflower, bighorn sheep, and golden eagle; and
- The population viability of desert tortoise in the Ord-Rodman ACEC and CHU.

Coordination with Federal Agencies

A3-3

Section 3 of the NOP (*Permits and Agency Coordination*) does not identify USFWS as an entity that may require permits and authorization over aspects of the proposed project. Typically, federal permits are required to address impacts to federally listed species and/or other

[2] Croft, B. 2013. *Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan – Desert Tortoise Linkage Evaluations – Ord-Rodman Linkages*.

Comment Set A3 – Town of Apple Valley (cont.)

specially protected species. The proposed project site is important to at least two federally protected species: desert tortoise and golden eagle. Impacts to desert tortoise require a permit under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and impacts to golden eagle require a permit under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA). If it is determined that no federal permits are required, then a full explanation as to why should be provided in the DEIR.

A3-3 cont.

Consideration of Other Alternatives

The Town and County understand that the purpose and need of the project is to help meet the California's energy mandates, including the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard and reducing greenhouse gasses (GHG). However, the proposed project is located in an ecologically sensitive site that is inappropriate for large-scale development. The analysis prepared by the project proponent should consider alternative project designs that reduce impacts to the landscape-level linkage and species. Alternatives that must be evaluated are the development of an alternative location with lower resource values and the feasibility of completing land swap with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for lands within an established Development Focus Area.

A3-4

Closing Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on issues needing consideration in the proposed project's environmental documents. If you would like additional information concerning the MSHCP/NCCP please contact me at (760) 240-7000, extension 7204, or email me at llamson@applevalley.org.

Sincerely,

Lori Lamson

Lori Lamson
Assistant Town Manager
Community and Development Services
Town of Apple Valley

CC: Terri Rahhal, Director of Land Use Service, County of San Bernardino
Heidi Duron, Planning Director, County of San Bernardino

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife

State of California - Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Suite C-220
Ontario, CA 91764
www.wildlife.ca.gov

***GAVIN NEWSOM**, Governor*
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director

November 13, 2020

Sarah Mongano
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Ave Suite 100-S
Sacramento, CA 95825
CEQA.comments@slc.ca.gov

Subject: Stagecoach Solar Project Notice of Preparation Comments
Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
State Clearinghouse No. 2020100234

Dear Ms. Mongano:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Stagecoach Solar Project, State Clearinghouse No. 2020100234. CDFW is responding to the NOP as a Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources (California Fish and Game Code Sections 711.7 and 1802, and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15386), and as a Responsible Agency regarding any discretionary actions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15381), such as the issuance of a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (California Fish and Game Code Sections 1600 et seq.) and/or a California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Permit for Incidental Take of Endangered, Threatened, and/or Candidate species (California Fish and Game Code Sections 2080 and 2080.1).

Project Location

The proposed Stagecoach Solar Project (Project) is located in the central portion of San Bernardino County, about 15 miles south of the City of Barstow and 12 miles northwest of the unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley. The Project area boundary encompasses five sections of undeveloped State land under the jurisdiction of the Lead Agency California State Lands Commission (CSLC), as well as adjacent private land owned by Aurora Solar LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Avangrid Renewables (Applicant). Private lands and federal lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management are adjacent to the Project area. The Project area is located east of Interstate 15, south of Interstate 40, and about 3 miles west of State Route 247. The Assessor's Parcels Numbers for the Project area include 0417-162- 53, 0417-162-54, 0464-301-01, 0464-301-02, 0464-301-04, and 0464-301-05. The Project site is located within the Apple Valley Natural Community Conservation Planning areas attributed with the confluence of wildlife corridors, wildlife linkages, and high-quality desert tortoise habitat.

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

Sarah Mongano
California State Lands Commission
Stagecoach Solar Notice of Preparation, State Clearinghouse No. 2020100234
November 13, 2020
Page 2 of 8

Project Description

The proposed Project area encompasses approximately 3,000 acres, with photovoltaic (PV) modules and associated infrastructure to be constructed on approximately 1,950 acres. The proposed Project would produce up to 200 megawatts (MW) of solar energy using photovoltaic PV technology. The activities also includes construction of a 9.1-mile-long 220 kV generation intertie (gen-tie) transmission line to carry the electricity generated by the solar facility to the regional transmission system interconnecting at a proposed 7-acre Southern California Edison Calcite Substation. Various project components comprise:

- 5-acre 34.5/220 kilovolt (kV) onsite electric substation and a 5,000-square-foot operations and maintenance (O&M) building.
- Direct current (DC) underground electricity collection system and a 34.5 kV collection system linking the PV modules to the onsite substation.
- Battery storage facility up to 200 MW and 100 acres in size.
- Solar resource and meteorological measurement stations.
- Newly constructed access roads throughout the interior of the proposed Project limits.
- Perimeter fencing and site security systems.
- Septic tank system and leach field serving the O&M building.
- Permanent groundwater wells, or an onsite water tank using water transported from offsite, providing water for the O&M building and to wash the PV panels.

Construction of the proposed Project is anticipated to require approximately 18 months to complete and would require an average daily workforce of up to 175 workers with up to 400 workers per day onsite during the peak construction period (approximately 12 months). During the peak of construction, a typical day at the site would include the transportation and installation of trackers, movement of heavy equipment, and transportation and installation of modules and other materials.

Construction of the PV systems would involve clearing and grubbing of existing vegetation, installing support racks, placing of modules and inverter units, trenching and installation of the underground collection system, and construction of internal service roads. Construction activities for the associated Project facilities would include: clearing and grading; construction of drainage components; foundation construction; development of staging areas and site access roads; and construction of the electrical substation, energy storage facility, O&M building, and transmission facilities. Security fencing would be installed around the perimeter of the Project infrastructure.

Following the construction phase, the Operations and Maintenance building would serve as the Project's office facilities for up to 10 permanent full-time employees. The Project facilities would be monitored during operating (daylight) hours, even though the Project would be capable of automatic start up, shutdown, self-diagnosis, and fault detection. Appropriate levels of security lighting would be installed, and the site would be secured 24 hours per day by onsite private security personnel or remote security services with motion-detection cameras. Maintenance activities for PV modules would include on-site repairs as required. Panel washing may be conducted as necessary based on site conditions. On a regular basis personnel would visit the substation to perform routine maintenance including, but not limited to, equipment testing, monitoring, and repair, routine procedures to ensure service continuity, and standard preventative maintenance. The underground cable system and battery storage facility would be

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

inspected, maintained, and repaired as necessary, following construction. If, at the end of the Lead Agency's lease and/or contract term to sell energy to the utility buyer, no contract extension is available or no other buyer of the energy emerges, the solar plant would be decommissioned and dismantled. After removal of all construction related on-site improvements, remediation and restoration of the area would be performed on the site to its pre-construction condition.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and the habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (i.e., biological resources); and administers the Natural Community Conservation Planning Program (NCCP Program). CDFW offers the comments and recommendations presented below to assist California State Lands Commission (Lead Agency) in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, impacts on biological resources. The comments and recommendations are also offered to enable CDFW to adequately review and comment on the proposed Project with respect to impacts on biological resources. CDFW recommends that the forthcoming DEIR address the following:

Assessment of Biological Resources

Section 15125(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states that knowledge of the regional setting of a Project is critical to the assessment of environmental impacts and that special emphasis should be placed on environmental resources that are rare or unique to the region. To enable CDFW to adequately review and comment on the Project, the DEIR should include a complete assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the Project footprint, with particular emphasis on identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their associated habitats. CDFW recommends that the DEIR specifically include: A4-1

1. An assessment of the various habitat types located within the Project footprint, and a map that identifies the location of each habitat type. CDFW recommends that floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and assessment be completed following 2009 or current version of The Manual of California Vegetation. Adjoining habitat areas should also be included in this assessment where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts offsite. Habitat mapping at the alliance level will help establish baseline vegetation conditions.

2. A general biological inventory of the fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite and within adjacent areas that could be affected by the Project. CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) in Sacramento should be contacted at (916) 322-2493 or CNDDB@wildlife.ca.gov to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat, including Significant Natural Areas identified under Chapter 12 of the Fish and Game Code, in the vicinity of the proposed Project. CDFW recommends that CNDDB Field Survey Forms be completed and submitted to CNDDB to document survey results. Online forms can be obtained and submitted at: https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDB/Submitting-Data. A4-2

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

Please note, CDFW's CNDDB is not exhaustive in terms of the data it houses, nor is it an absence database. CDFW recommends that it be used as a starting point in gathering information about the potential presence of species within the general area of the Project site. **A4-2 cont.**

3. A complete, recent inventory of rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species located within the Project footprint and within offsite areas with the potential to be affected, including California Species of Special Concern (SSC) and California Fully Protected Species (Fish and Game Code § 3511). Species to be addressed should include all those which meet the CEQA definition (CEQA Guidelines § 15380). The inventory should address seasonal variations in use of the Project area and should not be limited to resident species. Focused species-specific surveys, completed by a qualified biologist and conducted at the appropriate time of year and time of day when the sensitive species are active or otherwise identifiable, are required. Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where necessary. Note that CDFW generally considers biological field assessments for wildlife to be valid for a one-year period, and assessments for rare plants may be considered valid for a period of up to three years. Some aspects of the proposed Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if the Project is proposed to occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases, or if surveys are completed during periods of drought. **A4-3**

   CDFW recommends species-specific surveys for the threatened desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel. CDFW approved desert tortoise pre-construction surveys cover 100 percent of the project area and adjacent habitat using the methods described in the most recent *United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Field Manual. The Mohave Ground Squirrel Survey Guidelines* (Department of Fish and Game, July 2010) are available on CDFW's website (https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83975&inline).

   CDFW also recommends a survey for burrowing owl, a Species of Special Concern. Survey recommendations and guidelines are provided in the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (Department of Fish and Game, March 2012) (https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=83843&inline).

   Development of a desert kit fox and American badger mitigation and monitoring plan is recommended. Desert kit fox is a protected species, and American badger is a Species of Special Concern.

   CDFW also recommends a thorough, recent, floristic-based assessment of special status plants and natural communities, following CDFW's *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants).

Analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources **A4-4**

The DEIR should provide a thorough discussion of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts expected to adversely affect biological resources as a result of the Project. To ensure that

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

Project impacts to biological resources are fully analyzed, the following information should be included in the DEIR:

A4-4 cont.

1. A discussion of potential impacts from lighting, noise, human activity, and wildlife-human interactions created by zoning of development Projects or other Project activities adjacent to natural areas, exotic and/or invasive species, and drainage. The latter subject should address Project-related changes on drainage patterns and water quality within, upstream, and downstream of the Project site, including: volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site.

2. A discussion of potential indirect Project impacts on biological resources, including resources in areas adjacent to the Project footprint, such as nearby public lands (e.g. National Forests, State Parks, etc.), open space, adjacent natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and any designated and/or proposed reserve or mitigation lands (e.g., preserved lands associated with a Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other conserved lands).

3. An evaluation of impacts to adjacent open space lands from both the construction of the Project and long-term operational and maintenance needs.

4. A cumulative effects analysis developed as described under CEQA Guidelines § 15130. Please include all potential direct and indirect Project related impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, vernal pools, alluvial fan habitats, wildlife corridors or wildlife movement areas, aquatic habitats, sensitive species and other sensitive habitats, open lands, open space, and adjacent natural habitats in the cumulative effects analysis. General and specific plans, as well as past, present, and anticipated future Projects, should be analyzed relative to their impacts on similar plant communities and wildlife habitats.

Mitigation Measures for Project Impacts to Biological Resources

A4-5

The DEIR should include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the Project. When proposing measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts, CDFW recommends consideration of the following:

1. *Fully Protected Species*: Several Fully Protected Species (Fish and Game Code § 3511) have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area, including, but not limited to: White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time. Project activities described in the DEIR should be designed to completely avoid any fully protected species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. CDFW also recommends that the DEIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to fully protected species due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. CDFW recommends that the Lead Agency include in the analysis appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures to reduce any possible indirect impacts to fully protected species.

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

2. *Sensitive Plant Communities*: CDFW considers sensitive plant communities to be imperiled habitats having both local and regional significance. Plant communities, alliances, and associations with a statewide ranking of S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4 should be considered sensitive and declining at the local and regional level. These ranks can be obtained by querying the CNDDB and are included in the 2009 or current version of The Manual of California Vegetation. The DEIR should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect sensitive plant communities from Project-related direct and indirect impacts. Minimization measures may include transplanting perennial species, seed collection and dispersal from annual species, and other conservation strategies that will protect the viability of the local population. If minimization measures are implemented, monitoring of plant populations will be conducted annually for 5 years to assess the mitigation's effectiveness. The performance standard for mitigation will be no net reduction in the size or viability of the local population. **A4-6**

3. *Mitigation*: CDFW considers adverse Project-related impacts to sensitive species and habitats to be significant to both local and regional ecosystems, and the DEIR should include mitigation measures for adverse Project-related impacts to these resources. Mitigation measures should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts. For unavoidable impacts, onsite habitat restoration and/or enhancement should be evaluated and discussed in detail. If onsite mitigation is not feasible or would not be biologically viable and therefore not adequately mitigate the loss of biological functions and values, offsite mitigation through habitat creation and/or acquisition and preservation in perpetuity should be addressed. The DEIR should include measures to perpetually protect the targeted habitat values within mitigation areas from direct and indirect adverse impacts in order to meet mitigation objectives to offset Project-induced qualitative and quantitative losses of biological values. Specific issues that should be addressed include restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, long-term monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, increased human intrusion, etc. **A4-7**

4. *Nesting Birds and Migratory Bird Treaty Act:* Please note that it is the Project proponent's responsibility to comply with all applicable laws related to nesting birds and birds of prey. Migratory non-game native bird species are protected by international treaty under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*). In addition, sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the Fish and Game Code (FGC) also afford protective measures as follows: Section 3503 states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by FGC or any regulation made pursuant thereto; Section 3503.5 states that is it unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by FGC or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto; and Section 3513 states that it is unlawful to take or possess any migratory nongame bird as designated in the MBTA or any part of such migratory nongame bird except as provided by rules and regulations adopted by the Secretary of the Interior under provisions of the MBTA. CDFW recommends that the DEIR include the results of avian surveys, as well as specific avoidance and minimization measures to ensure that impacts to nesting birds do not occur. Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures may include, but not be limited to: Project phasing and timing, monitoring of Project-related noise (where applicable), sound walls, and buffers, where appropriate. The DEIR should also include specific avoidance and minimization measures **A4-8**

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

that will be implemented should a nest be located within the Project site. If pre-construction surveys are proposed in the DEIR, CDFW recommends that they be required no more than three (3) days prior to vegetation clearing or ground disturbance activities, as instances of nesting could be missed if surveys are conducted sooner. Preconstruction survey for burrowing owls should be conducted in areas supporting potentially suitable habitat and within 30 days prior to the start of construction activities. If ground-disturbing activities are delayed or suspended for more than 30 days after the pre-construction survey, CDFW recommends the site be resurveyed. Surveys for burrowing owls should be conducted in accordance with protocols established in the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (Department of Fish and Game, March 2012) or current version. If burrowing owls are detected, disturbance to burrows should be avoided during nesting season (February 1 through August 31) to avoid take. Buffers should be established around occupied burrows in accordance with guidance provided in the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (Department of Fish and Game, March 2012) or current version. Outside of the nesting season, if passive owl relocation techniques are proposed, CDFW recommends review by CDFW and compensatory mitigation for permanent loss of owl habitat consistent with the guidance provided in the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (Department of Fish and Game, March 2012) or current version..

A4-8 cont.

5. *Moving out of Harm's Way:* The proposed project is anticipated to result in the clearing of natural habitats that support native species. To avoid direct mortality, CDFW recommends that the lead agency condition the DEIR to require that a CDFW-approved qualified biologist be retained to be onsite prior to and during all ground- and habitat-disturbing activities to move out of harm's way special status species or other wildlife of low or limited mobility that would otherwise be injured or killed from project-related activities. Movement of wildlife out of harm's way should be limited to only those individuals that would otherwise by injured or killed, and individuals should be moved only as far a necessary to ensure their safety. Furthermore, it should be noted that the temporary relocation of onsite wildlife does not constitute effective mitigation for the purposes of offsetting project impacts associated with habitat loss.

A4-9

California Endangered Species Act

CDFW is responsible for ensuring appropriate conservation of fish and wildlife resources including threatened, endangered, and/or candidate plant and animal species, pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). A CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) is issued to conserve, protect, enhance, and restore State-listed CESA species and their habitats. CDFW recommends that a CESA ITP be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in "take" (California Fish and Game Code Section 86 defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill") of CESA-listed species.

Take of any CESA-listed species is prohibited except as authorized by state law (Fish and Game Code, §§ 2080 & 2085). If the Project, including the Project construction or any Project-related activity during the life of the Project, results in take of CESA-listed species, CDFW recommends that the Project proponent seek appropriate authorization prior to Project implementation through an ITP. Desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel are two CESA-listed threatened species that have potential to occur within the Project Area, presence needs to be determined by protocol surveys required by the Lead Agency.

A4-10

Comment Set A4 – California Department of Fish and Wildlife (cont.)

CDFW encourages early consultation, as significant modification to the proposed Project and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures may be necessary to obtain a CESA ITP. Please note that the proposed avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures should be sufficient for CDFW to conclude that the Project's impacts are minimized and fully mitigated and adequate funding is ensured to implement the measures and for monitoring compliance with, and effectiveness of, those measures.

A4-10 cont.

Lake and Streambed Alteration Program

A4-11

Fish and Game Code section 1602 requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may do one or more of the following: Substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream or lake; Substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or Deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream or lake. Please note that "any river, stream or lake" includes those that are episodic (i.e., those that are dry for periods of time) as well as those that are perennial (i.e., those that flow year-round). This includes ephemeral streams, desert washes, and watercourses with a subsurface flow. It may also apply to work undertaken within the flood plain of a body of water.

Upon receipt of a complete notification, CDFW determines if the proposed Project activities may substantially adversely affect existing fish and wildlife resources and whether a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement is required. An LSA Agreement includes measures necessary to protect existing fish and wildlife resources. CDFW may suggest ways to modify your Project that would eliminate or reduce harmful impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW's issuance of an LSA Agreement is a "Project" subject to CEQA (see Pub. Resources Code 21065). To facilitate issuance of an LSA Agreement, if necessary, the DEIR should fully identify the potential impacts to the lake, stream, or riparian resources, and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, and monitoring and reporting commitments. Early consultation with CDFW is recommended, since modification of the proposed Project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. To obtain a Lake or Streambed Alteration notification package, please go to https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/LSA/Forms.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the NOP of a DEIR for the Project and recommends that the Lead Agency addresses CDFW's comments and concerns in the forthcoming DEIR. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Dr. Shankar Sharma, Senior Environmental Scientist Specialist at Shankar.Sharma@wildlife.ca.gov or (909) 228-3692.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Scott Wilson
8091B1A9242F49C...

Scott Wilson
Environmental Program Manager

ec: State Clearinghouse (state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov)

Comment Set A5 – Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center

Email: Stagecoach Solar Project Team

From: Adams CIV Erin M <erin.adams@usmc.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 10:13 AM
To: Comments, CEQA@SLC <CEQA.Comments@slc.ca.gov>
Cc: Brown CIV Kristina L <kristina.brown@usmc.mil>
Subject: Stagecoach Solar Project NOP Comments

Good morning, Sarah,

Apologies for the late response, and fully understand if our comments cannot be incorporated. Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center has had personnel turn-over the past few months and this project got missed. If not too late, please consider the following comment for the Stagecoach Solar Project NOP for EIR. A5-1

"Translocation efforts needed for this project should follow the latest USFWS guidance for translocation, to include but not limited to the handling, marking and health assessment protocols. Requesting coordination and cooperation with Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) regarding translocation, disposition, and monitoring plans/data, as this information will be relevant to the effectiveness of MCAGCC's long-term monitoring program and analyses aimed towards recovery and sustainment of the species."

Best,
Erin

Erin M Adams
Director, Government & External Affairs
Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command
Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center
Twentynine Palms, CA
760-830-5473

Comment Set B1 – California Unions for Reliable Energy

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ATTORNEYS AT LAW
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ANDREW J. GRAF
TANYA A. GULESSERIAN
KENDRA D. HARTMANN*
KYLE C. JONES
RACHAEL E. KOSS
NIRIT LOTAN
WILLIAM C. MUMBY

MARC D. JOSEPH
Of Counsel

*Not admitted in California.
Licensed in Colorado.

October 14, 2020

VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL

Brian Bugsch
Chief of Land Management Division
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100
South Sacramento CA 95825
Email: Brian.Bugsch@slc.ca.gov

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Eric Gillies, Acting Chief of Environmental Planning & Management Division
Email: Eric.Gillies@slc.ca.gov

Sarah Mongano, Senior Environmental Scientist
Email: Sarah.Mongano@slc.ca.gov

Re: Request for Mailed Notice of Actions and Hearings – Stagecoach Solar Project (SCH No. 2020100234)

Dear Mr. Bugsch, Mr. Gillies, and Ms. Mongano:

We are writing on behalf of California Unions for Reliable Energy ("CURE") to request mailed notice of the availability of any environmental review document, prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, related to the Stagecoach Solar Project (SCH No. 2020100234) ("Project"), proposed by Aurora Solar LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Avangrid Renewables, as well as a copy of the environmental review document when it is made available for public review. B1-1

The Project consists of construction and operation of a solar generation project, which would produce up to 200 megawatts (MW) of solar energy using

Comment Set B1 – California Unions for Reliable Energy (cont.)

photovoltaic (PV) technology. The Project area encompasses approximately 3,000 acres of State-owned land in the central portion of San Bernardino County, California. The Project includes PV modules and associated infrastructure to be constructed on approximately 1,950 acres, including a direct current (DC) underground electricity collection system and a 34.5 kV collection system linking the PV modules to the onsite substation, a 200 MW battery storage facility, solar resource and meteorological measurement stations, and a 9.1-mile-long 220 kV generation intertie (gen-tie) transmission line to carry the electricity generated by the solar facility to the regional transmission system interconnecting at a proposed 7-acre Southern California Edison Calcite Substation.

We also request mailed notice of any and all hearings and/or actions related to the Project. These requests are made pursuant to Public Resources Code Sections 21092.2, 21080.4, 21083.9, 21092, 21108 and 21152 and Government Code Section 65092, which require local agencies to mail such notices to any person who has filed a written request for them with the clerk of the agency's governing body. B1-2

Please send the above requested items by email and U.S. Mail to our South San Francisco Office as follows:

U.S. Mail
Sheila Sannadan
Adams Broadwell Joseph & Cardozo
601 Gateway Boulevard, Suite 1000
South San Francisco, CA 94080-7037

Email
ssannadan@adamsbroadwell.com

Please call me at (650) 589-1660 if you have any questions. Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Sannadan
Legal Assistant

SMS:acp

Comment Set B2 – Saint Joseph Monastery

Email: Stagecoach Solar Project Team

From: Minh Pham <ngocminhps@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 03, 2020 7:34 AM
To: Comments, CEQA@SLC <CEQA.Comments@slc.ca.gov>
Subject: Stagecoach Solar Project NOP Comments

Ms. Sarah Mongano
Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825

Dear Ms. Mongano,

I am writing this letter to tell you that this proposed project would be devastating for our Saint Joseph Monastery that is located at 21010 Lucerne Valley Cutoff Road, Lucerne Valley. We have been here since 2004. We have spent millions of dollars to improve this monastery for the last 16 years. Now, there are 11 full-time monks who live and work at this sacred property. We also have thousands of people who have visited, prayed with us, and made retreats in this place. **B2-1**

The Stagecoach Industrialized Solar project is over 3.6 miles wide and 2 miles long, would destroy the quiet and peaceful use of our Monastery. We chose this location 16 years ago because of the beauty, tranquility, and harmony with the natural ecosystem present.

Industrialization of the Lucerne Valley area with traffic, noise, fugitive dust, extensive grading, tearing out 3,000 acres of Mojave desert tortoise habitat, visual disturbance, and air quality impacts are significant issues to us. The existing almost pristine beautiful flora and fauna are also important to be conserved.

Conservation of the important wildlife corridors, pristine habitat for the Golden Eagles, Desert Tortoises and Bighorn sheep are also important. We see these protected animals throughout the year. Many of these animals migrate through this immediate area. Please address these items in your Environmental Impact report. **B2-2**

Stagecoach Solar will render our sacred monastery as unusable, it will displace our community, and our way of life will be pretty much will be over. These items should be addressed as well. **B2-3**

Thank you for your consideration,
Brother Minh Pham, O.Cist.

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee

November 5, 2020

Sarah Mongano
Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825

Scoping Comments for the Proposed Stagecoach Solar Project including Southern California Edison Calcite Substation
File Ref: SCH No. 2020100234 CSLC EIR No. 763; W30213; W26868

The Homestead Valley Community Council (HVCC) is a coalition of community associations in unincorporated communities on State Route 247 in the area mapped in the San Bernardino Countywide Plan as the Homestead Valley. B3-1

Summary:
-HVCC seeks State Scenic Highway designation for S.R.247.
-HVCC has submitted the VISUAL ASSESSMENT, core of the designation process.
-HVCC currently works with San Bernardino County Land Use Services on the final steps of scenic designation - the CORRIDOR PROTECTION PLAN.
-The Proposed Stagecoach Solar and SCE Calcite Substation projects are incompatible with scenic designation and corridor protection.
Therefore, the EIR for these projects MUST acknowledge their **significant and unavoidable negative impact** these projects would have on the scenic resources of State Route 247. They cannot coexist with Scenic 247.

Commentary: The Scenic 247 Visual Assessment, under review by County and Caltrans, demonstrates that the Stagecoach Solar array and equipment on State School Lands, the Calcite Substation, and their attendant transmission lines present miles of intrusive visual impact in the Scenic Corridor of S.R. 247. **This intrusion cannot be mitigated in any meaningful manner**, in one of the most scenic areas selected on the entire route.

The HVCC Scenic 247 Committee has opposed elements in these proposals in the past; rejected parts of zombie projects now reassemble themselves. Aside from established environmental and economic injuries to an area designated as "disadvantaged," Aurora Solar LLC ignores or shrugs off clear statements from various levels of government of their intent to preserve scenic and biological resources in the region (see attached review). B3-2

The California State Lands Commission envisioned itself as a recognized leader that "champions environmentally sustainable public land management and balanced resource protection for the benefit and enjoyment of all current and future generations of Californians." Now its Mission and Vision seem disregarded as they carried out recent School Lands consolidation in a manner that only "maximizes development potential."

Thank you for your attention to the following details and attachments.

Betty Munson
Committee Chair
760-364-2646

Endorsed by:

Homestead Valley Community Council
www.hvccsite.org

Morongo Basin Historical Society
www.mbhs.org

Flamingo Heights Community Association
www.fhca.com

Johnson Valley Improvement Association
see www.johnsonvalley.com

Hammerking Productions
dave@kingofthehammers.com

Landers Association

Yucca Mesa Improvement Association
www.yuccamesa.org

Western American Railroad Museum
www.barstowrailmuseum.org

Lucerne Valley Chamber of Commerce

Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association

Lucerne Valley Market and Hardware

Lucerne Valley Museum

Route 66 Mother Road Museum
www.route66museum.org

Joshua Tree Gateway Communities Tourism Committee
www.joshuatreegatewaycommunities.com

Points of Interest Promotions Lucerne Valley
billlembright@thenewlight.net

Rockhound Field Trip Fanatics!
http://rockhound-field-trips.ning.com

Morongo Basin Conservation Association
www.mbconservation.org

Lucerne Valley-Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council

Barstow Chamber of Commerce
www.barstowchamber.com

Morongo Basin Municipal Advisory Council

SCENIC 247 COMMITTEE
50567A Quailbush Rd., Johnson Valley, CA 92285 • www.scenichighway247.com
A committee of the Homestead Valley Community Council

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

SCENIC 247

Elements of Visual Intrusion by Stagecoach Solar and Calcite Substation Projects in the Scenic 247 Corridor

The Scenic 247 Committee review of the project description deduces from similar facilities extreme intrusions of expanse, height, and distance:

- PV modules and associated infrastructure to be constructed on approximately 1,950 acres
- A 5-acre on-site electric substation with components possibly over 50 feet high, meteorological towers, a storage (battery) system planned to occupy some 100 acres, inverter stations up to 12 feet high, overhead lines supported by even higher poles, plus security fencing, a network of new roads, and a 5,000-sq-ft maintenance building
- an overhead generation tie line (gen-tie line) extending approximately 9 miles south to the proposed SCE Calcite Substation, zigzagging over and along either side of S.R. 247.

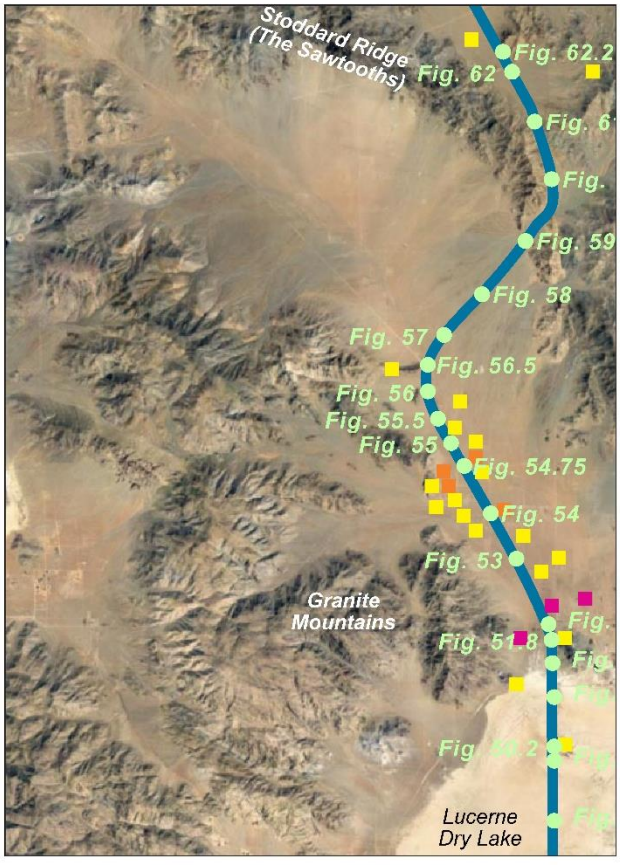
Therefore, the Scenic 247 Committee concludes that this proposed industrial solar project, with its infrastructure, towers, transmission pylons, and associated SCE Calcite Substation:

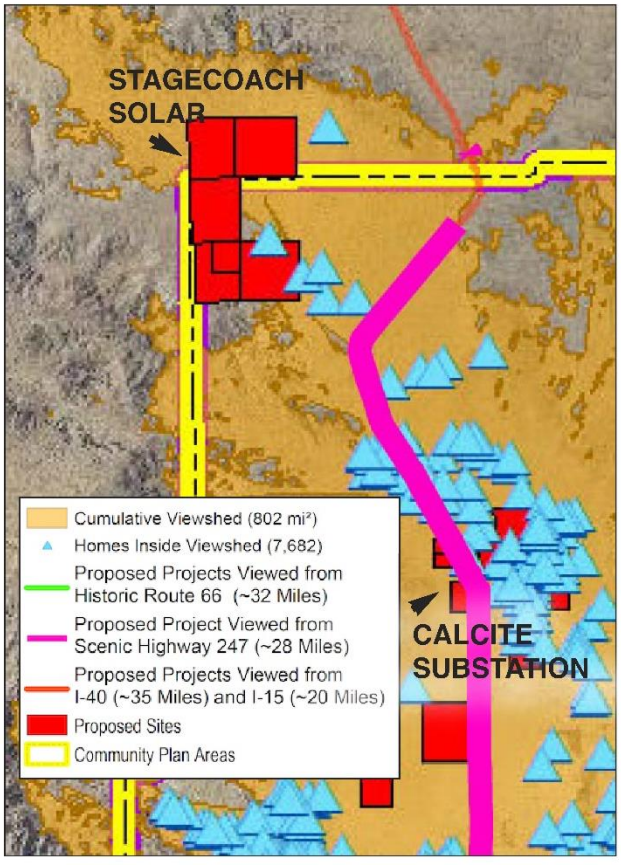
1) will undoubtedly have a **significant and unavoidable negative impact** on the scenic corridor,

2) will increasingly damage protected biological and scenic resources, and

3) will substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings on both sides of the highway in a manner that cannot be mitigated.

B3-3





Left: Map detail from Scenic 247 Visual Assessment showing photography (Figures) viewpoints in Section 4 South, between Lucerne Dry Lake and the entry into Goat Pass
Right: Map detail showing Scenic Corridor 247 and cumulative proposed projects in its viewshed

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

SCENIC 247 CALIFORNIA

Excerpts from Landscape Architect Narrative:
Views and Intrusions in the Scenic 247 Visual Assessment

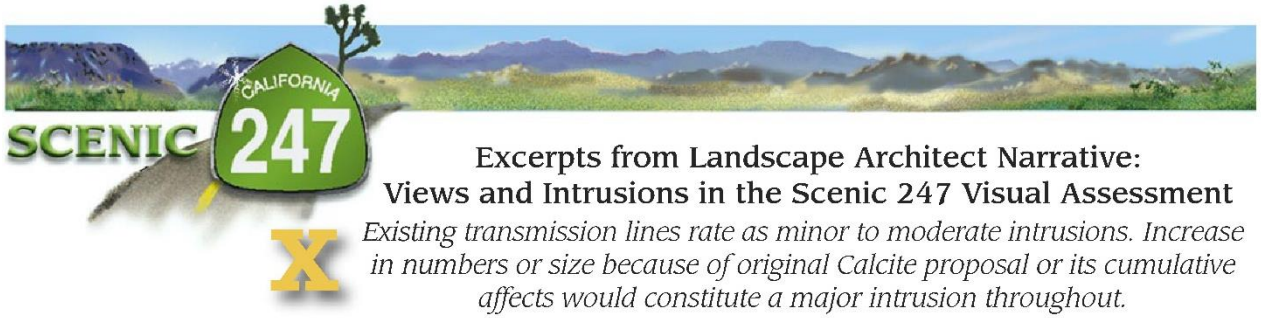
Existing transmission lines rate as minor to moderate intrusions. Increase in numbers or size because of original Calcite proposal or its cumulative affects would constitute a major intrusion throughout.

Figure 51.5W - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The scenic Granite Mountains, viewed from PM 51.5 looking west. Creosote bushes begin to populate the landscape. Transmission lines may be discernible running along the base of the mountains at a distance of two miles.*

Figure 52N - *Intrusion: The three parallel SCE transmission lines cross the highway just north of PM 52.*

SEE THE ENTIRE VISUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY 247
http://scenichighway247.com/documents.html

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)



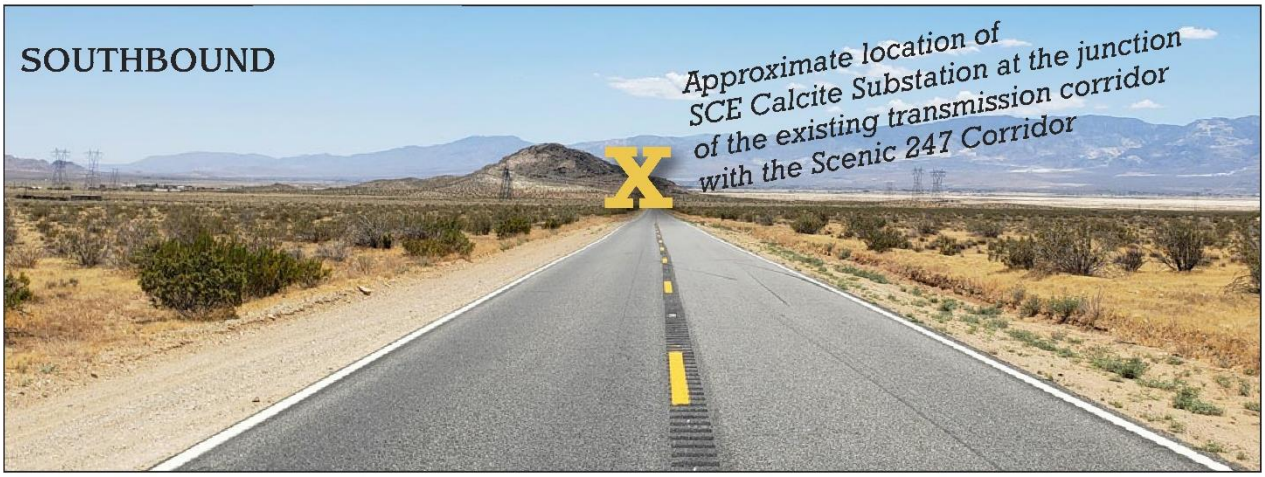


Figure 53S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: Peterman Hill, viewed as Scenic by the southbound traveler from PM 53. The SCE transmission lines are visible here to the southbound traveler as they cross the highway ahead.*

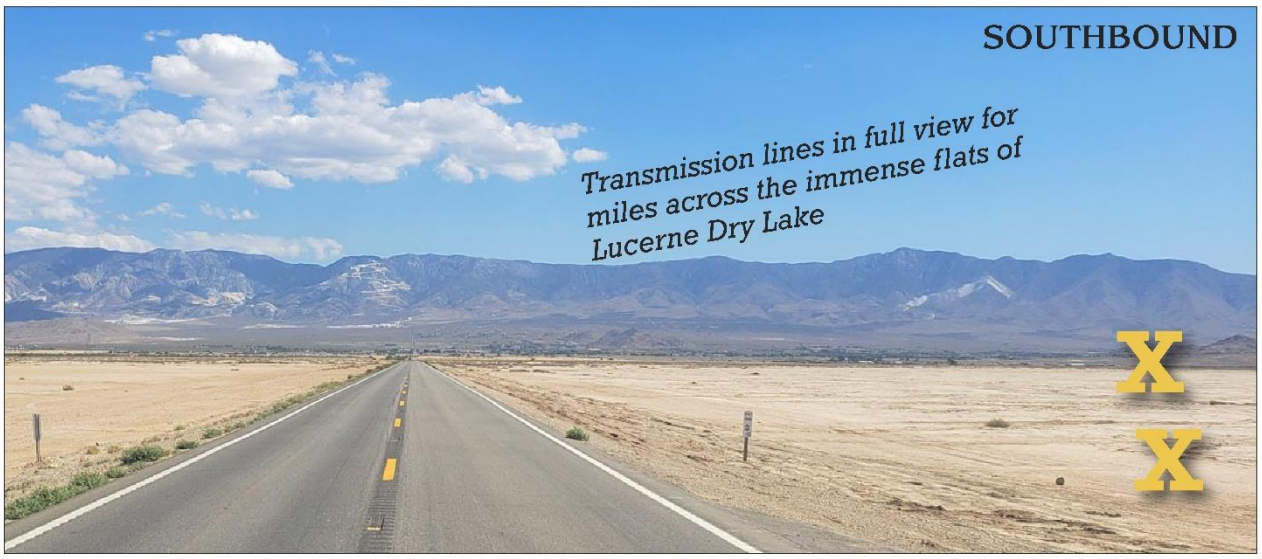


Figure 49S - *Scenic View with Intrusion: The mines on the San Bernardino Mountains above Lucerne Valley become discernible as intrusions at about PM 49 looking south.*

SEE THE ENTIRE VISUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY 247
http://scenichighway247.com/documents.html

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

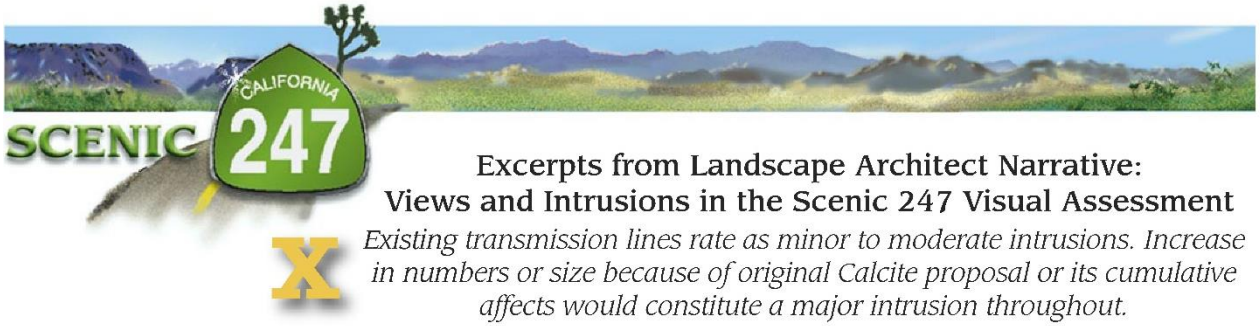


Figure 56.25N - *Scenic View: Approaching Lucerne Valley Cutoff Road. Looking north from PM 56.25, vivid views open up ahead, with few visual intrusions for the northbound traveler.*

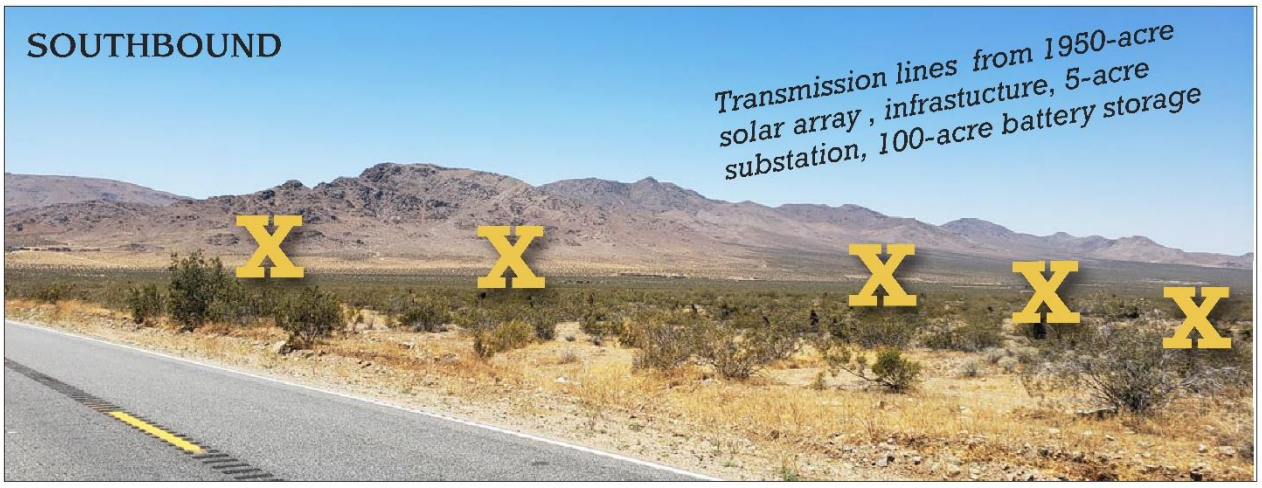


Figure 58SW - *Scenic View: Looking southwest toward Sidewinder Mountain from PM 58 over the vast open valley crossed by Lucerne Valley Cutoff.*

SEE THE ENTIRE VISUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY 247
http://scenichighway247.com/documents.html

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

Figure 59S - *Scenic View: Looking southeast from PM 59 with the foothills of the Ord Mountains in the foreground to the east, past the Granite Mountains and Peterman Hill in the mid-ground, then over Lucerne Dry Lake to the San Bernardino Mountains beyond.*

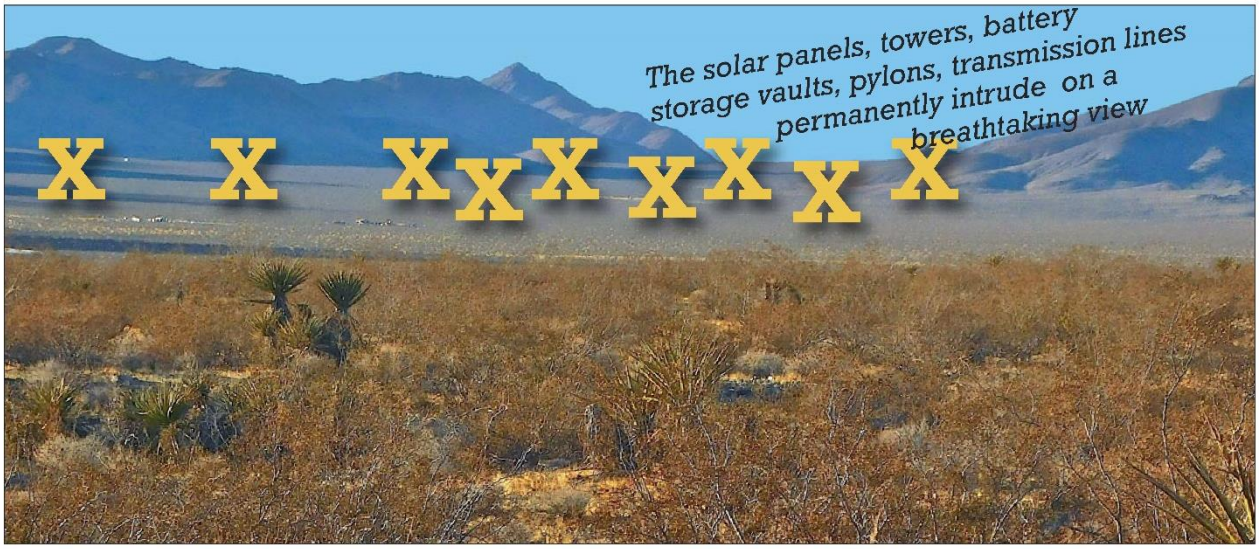
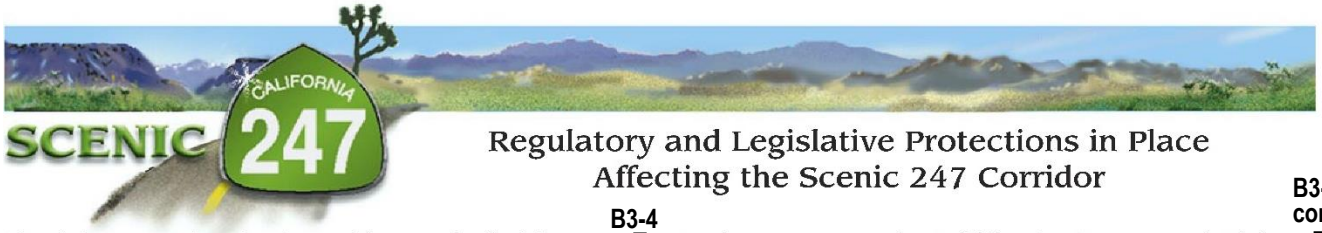


Figure 58W - *Scenic View: The beautiful wide valley traversed by Lucerne Valley Cutoff Road comes into prominence as the northbound traveler approaches Goat Pass. Zoom view from PM 58, looking west to the pass leading to historic Stoddard Wells Road.*

SEE THE ENTIRE VISUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SCENIC HIGHWAY 247
http://scenichighway247.com/documents.html

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)



Regulatory and Legislative Protections in Place Affecting the Scenic 247 Corridor

B3-4

Sited in a gently-sloping valley encircled by DRECP-designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Linkage Networks, one would assume such designations would preclude industrialization of the scenic corridor. However, planners seem to have overlooked, or ignored, these designations when applied to this landscape.

Calcite substation could accommodate utility-scale projects besides these proposed. This would induce further utility-scale development degrading the region. Just the prospect of a new Calcite substation triggered an influx of project proposals in its vicinity. Three more utility-scale projects queued up to interconnect with Calcite. If permitted, this would have the **cumulative, substantial and unavoidable** impact of industrialization of more than 8,000 acres in Lucerne Valley.

Developers have proposed siting Calcite substation in an existing transmission corridor which already intrudes on the Scenic 247 corridor. Substation towers and infrastructure would be quite visible across the flat expanses of Lucerne Dry Lake.

B3-5

Scenic Designation

The County has designated S.R. 247 as scenic. The State has established it as eligible for scenic designation, therefore it has scenic protection under Chapter 27 of the California Department of Transportation Standard Environmental Reference:
"The intent of the State Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance California's natural scenic beauty. If a highway is listed as eligible for official designation, it is also part of the Scenic Highway System and **care must be taken to preserve its eligible status.**"
—Department of Transportation website:
http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/vol1/sec3/community/ch27via/chap27via.htm#scenic

We must also point out that Caltrans submitted the following comment on the DRECP:
"**Ensure each energy project considers impact upon officially designated and eligible State Scenic Highways.**"
—Landscape Architecture website:
http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/scenic_hwy.htm

B3-5 cont.

Furthermore, see the California Streets and Highways Code, specifically sections 260, 263, and 263.1:
Section 260. (Added by Stats. 1963, Ch. 1788.) Cite as: Cal. Sts. & High. Code §260.
"It is the intent of the Legislature in designating certain portions of the state highway system as state scenic highways to establish the State's responsibility for the protection and enhancement of California's natural scenic beauty by identifying those portions of the state highway system which, together with the adjacent scenic corridors, require special
scenic conservation treatment. It is further declared to be the intent of the Legislature in designating such scenic highways to assign responsibility for the development of such
scenic highways and for the establishment and application of specific planning and design standards and procedures appropriate thereto and to indicate, in broad statement terms, the
location and extent of routes and areas requiring continuing and careful co-ordination of planning, design, construction, and regulation of land use and development, by state and local agencies as appropriate, **to protect the social and economic values provided by the State's
scenic resources.**

Section 263. (Amended by Stats. 1991, Ch. 775, Sec. 6.) Cite as: Cal. Sts. & High. Code §263.
"The state scenic highway system is hereby established and shall be composed of the highways specified in this article. The highways listed in Sections 263.1 to 263.8, inclusive, are either eligible for designation as state scenic highways or have been so designated...

Section 263.1. (Amended by Stats. 1994, Ch. 1220, Sec. 27.) Cite as: Cal. Sts. & High. Code §263.1.
"The state scenic highway system shall include: Routes 28, 35, 38, 52, 53, 62, 74, 75, 76, 89, 96, 97, 127, 150, 151, 154, 156, 158, 161, 173, 197, 199, 203, 209, 221, 236, 239, 243, **247**, 254, and 330 in their entirety.

SCENIC 247 COMMITTEE
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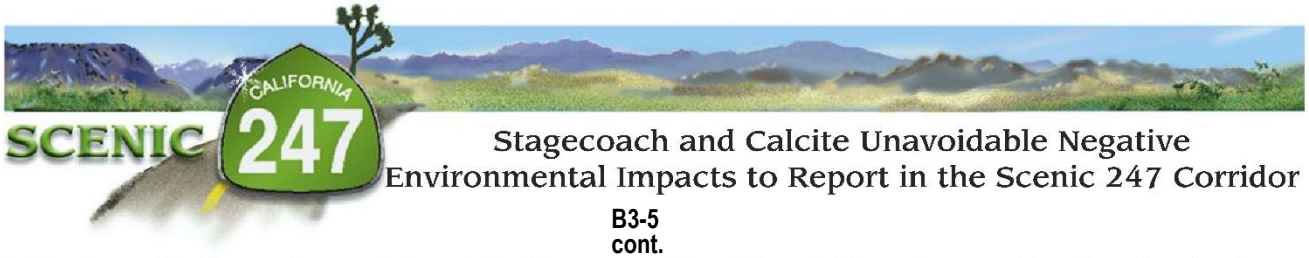
A committee of the Homestead Valley Community Council

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)



Stagecoach and Calcite Unavoidable Negative Environmental Impacts to Report in the Scenic 247 Corridor

B3-5 cont.

Aside from all the environmental and justice considerations, the EIR for the Stagecoach Solar and Calcite Substation Projects MUST concede the **significant and unavoidable negative impacts** these projects would have on the Scenic Corridor of State Route 247, noting the significant intrusions they would introduce into our Visual Assessment (see below), as well as conflicting with the mission of the California State Lands Commission and the numerous government policies and codes referenced above in these comments.

B3-6

Tourism The Scenic 247 Committee's campaign for Scenic Highway status dovetails with the County tourism program. Scenic 247 links urban centers and a recreational gold mine in the San Bernardino Mountains and the Mojave Desert.

Scenic Highway designation itself makes a proven magnet for travelers.

Economy We have argued many times: San Bernardino County suffers from lack of revenue, lack of jobs. The County exports mineral resources, but little else brings outside money into the region – except the story of its attractions, building tourism to support local enterprises and enhance County and State revenues.

Highway businesses cannot survive on local population alone. The stores, restaurants, medical offices in our communities serve residents who benefit from tourism and recreation revenues.

These considerations spurred the Scenic 247 campaign, as well as the prehistoric and historic heritage of the territory it traverses, and some of the least-developed scenery remaining in the State of California.

Visual Impact The major consideration for development in a Scenic Corridor is Visual Impact, how compatible is it with the character of the area? (Note: Many states and countries treat their rural and wild scenery as a natural resource, which it is). Stagecoach/Calcite are NOT compatible.

B3-7

Industrial-scale renewable energy generation in the California desert ignores this value. Already, the unpleasant visual impacts of wind turbines, massive solar fields and miles of transmission lines mar the legendary California experience for travelers.

Studies prove that people come to the desert from cities, other states and countries around the world, not for industrialization, but for wide open spaces. Industrial-scale renewable energy development means loss of tourism, and loss of present and future tax revenues.

B3-8

The County and California need revitalizing, not government-imposed depression, not ghost towns. Promises of local jobs from the energy developers never materialize; instead we witness destruction of desert habitat and private property values as the power generated flows to urban use.*

The Scenic 247 corridor is a valuable and irreplaceable resource for conservation. Industrial exploitation cannot coexist in it.

B3-9

We urge planners to remember that if we allow precious open desert spaces to be exploited for intrusive industrial-scale energy projects, what they will do cannot be undone. We must utilize all of the already-developed spaces first for solar and wind, and prioritize "point-of-use" solutions if we must increase renewable energy supplies. This is the better way.

* See Appendix: Market Value Impact of Commercial Solar Farms

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Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

B3-10

Market Value Impact of Commercial Solar Farms and Diversified Solar on Property Values in San Bernardino County

Prepared by John Miller
Residential Real Estate Appraiser
January 07, 2015

… **the industrialization of these communities will be the most likely consequence of the development of these projects**. If left unchecked the market will clarify itself and the residential use of the land surrounding these projects will most likely be minimized if not completely eliminated and the expansion of Commercial Scale solar projects on the land surrounding the existing projects will increase. This will further push residential development and use of the land out of these areas and solidify these areas as Commercial Scale Solar / Industrial Zones **devoid of any and all residential use rural or otherwise.**

Size and footprint of the development

Size and appearance of a new development, in the case of the development of a Community Scale Solar development with a new substation and powerlines, are important in determining the visual impact. As such, the larger a structural feature, the more it is likely to be visible and have a visual impact. The visual impact can also create or change the market perception of a community. For instance, development of a 20 story high rise hotel building in the middle of Yosemite Valley would alter or otherwise change the appeal of the valley for the majority of the market participants. While there is a need for lodging in the Yosemite Valley and every year demand increases, developing the project would diminish the visual appeal of the area and alter the perception of the area as a whole.

While this is a dramatic illustration of the impact that a development can have on a given market as a whole, it demonstrates the fundamental principle that is the basis for considering not only the impact that such a development would have on those properties adjacent to the development but also the impact that such a development has on the neighborhood or local market as a whole.

As evidenced in the development of these projects within several already impacted communities,the ability to mitigate the impact on view is very limited at best.

Valuation Components

1. TYPE OF USERS

Visual sensitivity will vary with the type of users. Recreational sightseers or residents are most likely highly sensitive to any changes in visual quality, whereas workers or other uninterested parties, who pass through the area on a regular basis, may not be as sensitive to change.

2. AMOUNT OF USE

Areas that are seen and utilized by large numbers of people are potentially more sensitive.

Protection of visual values usually becomes more important as the number of viewers increase.

This is evident when evaluating the total number of negative comments when projects are proposed in or near residential neighborhoods as opposed to industrial zones.

3. PUBLIC INTEREST

The visual quality of an area may be of concern to local, State, or National groups. Indicators of this concern are usually expressed in public meetings, letters, newspaper or magazine articles, newsletters, land-use plans, etc. Public controversy created in response to proposed activities that would change the landscape character is therefore considered.

4. ADJACENT LAND USES

The interrelationship with land uses in adjacent lands can affect the visual sensitivity of an area.

For example, an area within the view shed of a residential area may be very sensitive, whereas an area surrounded by commercially developed lands may not be visually sensitive.

5. SPECIAL AREAS

Management objectives for special areas such as Natural Areas, Wilderness Areas or Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenic Areas, Scenic Roads or Trails, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), frequently require special consideration for the protection of the visual values. This does not necessarily mean that these areas are scenic, but rather that one of the management objectives may be to preserve the natural landscape setting.

Property for sale next to Cascade Solar in Joshua Tree, just as construction began

Comment Set B3 – Scenic 247 Committee (cont.)

The management objectives for these areas may be used as a basis for assigning sensitivity levels.

According to this method, visual quality is rated according to the presence and characteristics of seven key components of the landscape. These components include landform, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity and cultural modifications.

Market Impact Analysis

The Market Impact Analysis is utilized to estimate the impact associated with development of Community Scale Solar projects in residential areas of the Mojave Desert area of San Bernardino County. The opinions and data utilized were developed from interviews with members of impacted communities, data on Land and Homes sales from Local MLs and Title companies, as well as review of previous studies and reports and the experts cited in this report.

IMPACTS

1. What is the risk that development of Community Scale Solar will affect or impact the views or scenic vistas within a Residential Zoned Community?

In my research, I found that the overwhelming majority of residents within the viewshed of the solar projects have a negative opinion of the aesthetic impact associated with a solar farm within the community. The most common response was that the facilities are **blight on the community** or that the projects turn the neighborhood into an industrial zone.

My inspection of several Community Scale Solar developments revealed that the facilities are significantly impactful on the view and appearance of the community if placed proximate residential properties. When appropriately placed proximate existing industrial properties or in areas that are otherwise protected by a topographic, vegetative or other natural feature, the impact is considered to be nominal.

Therefore, based on the research, interviews and inspections, my opinion is that **the impact is Significant**

TOPOGRAPHY

Topography is one of the most important factors to siting a solar project, specifically, the position of the project on the slope on which the project sits. This is because the projects that have the most visual exposure to a community typically face the most opposition and are therefore the most likely to impact a potential buyer or seller of impacted property. This was evidenced on several occasions when interviewing homeowners in Lucerne Valley and Yucca Valley. When asked the question, "Do you support or oppose wind and why?" the response was an emphatic "No on Wind".

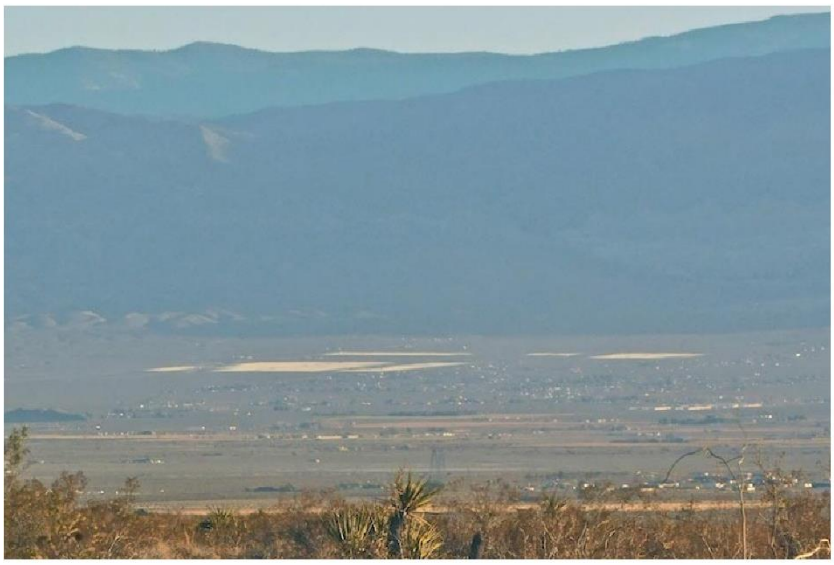
When the respondents were asked why, they inevitably stated "Because it kills my view" or "I don't want to have to look at those ugly things on my hill side."

Conversely when asked the question, "Would you support or oppose a community scale solar project in your area?" the same people stated that they have no problem with solar. When asked why, they almost universally stated "because they don't impact my view" or "they are flat and so I can't see them".

However when asked if they would support a solar project being placed next door, All of the respondents stated "no" or "absolutely not". The fact is that most people on the valley floor looking up at the mountains do not want to have their view altered by wind turbines and most people on the hills or sloped areas do not want to have their view of the valley altered by utility scale solar farms. Therefore, based on the research and interviews my conclusion is, based on the location of the projects at a given point on the slope of the surrounding land, **the impact on property values within the viewshed is Significant** based on its location, and should be considered as it can be either negative or neutral based on the location and mitigation measures.

While the prospects of finding a speculative investor for the 17 parcels of land as residential development land are low, these 17 parcels are going to attract attention as possible future solar farm land. The value of land for this type of development land is significantly higher and as such the owners will be inclined to sell. This will further expand the development of solar in the area and result in the Industrialization of an area that had an intended use of growing agricultural crops and single family residential developments for small farms and ranches as stated in the General plan of San Bernardino County.

B3-10 cont.



Lone Valley industrial solar fields in the community of Lucerne Valley

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council

DESERT TORTOISE COUNCIL
4654 East Avenue S #257B
Palmdale, California 93552
www.deserttortoise.org
eac@deserttortoise.org

Via email

11 November 2020

Sarah Mongano
Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-S
Sacramento, CA 95825
CEQA.comments@slc.ca.gov

RE: "Stagecoach Solar Project Notice of Preparation (NOP) Comments" (CSLC EIR No. 763; W30213; W26868)

Dear Ms. Mongano,

The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) is a non-profit organization comprised of hundreds of professionals and laypersons who share a common concern for wild desert tortoises and a commitment to advancing the public's understanding of desert tortoise species. Established in 1975 to promote conservation of tortoises in the deserts of the southwestern United States and Mexico, the Council routinely provides information and other forms of assistance to individuals, organizations, and regulatory agencies on matters potentially affecting desert tortoises within their geographic ranges.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments on the above-referenced project. Given the location of the proposed project in habitats potentially occupied by Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) (synonymous with "Agassiz's desert tortoise"), our comments pertain to enhancing protection of this species during activities authorized by the California State Lands Commission (CSLS) and California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Please accept, carefully review, and include in the relevant project file the Council's following scoping comments for the proposed project. Additionally, we ask that the CSLS and CPUC respond in an email that you have received this comment letter so we are sure our concerns have been registered with the appropriate personnel and offices for this project.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Summary of Proposed Project
Aurora Solar LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Avangrid Renewables, has applied to the CSLC for lease of lands owned by the CSLC on which to construct and operate a solar generation project, called the Stagecoach Solar Project (Project). The proposed Project would produce up to 200 megawatts (MW) of solar energy using photovoltaic (PV) technology. The proposed Project area encompasses approximately 3,000 acres, with PV modules and the following associated infrastructure to be constructed on approximately 1,950 acres:

- 5-acre 34.5/220 kilovolt (kV) onsite electric substation and a 5,000-square-footoperations and maintenance (O&M) building.
- Direct current (DC) underground electricity collection system and a 34.5 kVcollection system linking the PV modules to the onsite substation.
- Battery storage facility up to 200 MW and 100 acres in size.
- Solar resource and meteorological measurement stations.
- Newly constructed access roads throughout the interior of the proposed Project limits.
- Perimeter fencing and site security systems.
- Septic tank system and leach field serving the O&M building.
- Permanent groundwater wells, or an onsite water tank using water transported from offsite, providing water for the O&M building and to wash the PV panels.

The proposed Project also includes construction of a 9.1-mile-long 220 kV generation intertie (gen-tie) transmission line to carry the electricity generated by the solar facility to the regional transmission system interconnecting at a proposed 7-acre Southern California Edison Calcite Substation.

Operations and maintenance of the proposed Project would include routine maintenance and on-site repairs as required. The underground cable system and battery storage facility would be inspected, maintained, and repaired as necessary, following construction. Panel washing may be conducted as necessary based on site conditions.

Decommissioning would occur at the end of the CSLC lease and/or contract term to sell energy to the utility buyer, or if no contract extension is available or no other buyer of the energy emerges. The solar plant would be decommissioned and dismantled. After removal of all construction related on-site improvements, remediation and restoration of the area would be performed on the site to its pre-construction condition.

The proposed Project is in the central portion of San Bernardino County, about 12 miles northwest of the unincorporated community of Lucerne Valley and 15 miles south of the City of Barstow. The Project area is located east of Interstate 15, south of Interstate 40, and about 3 miles west of State Route 247.

Objectives of the Proposed Project
- Establish reliable solar PV power-generating facilities in an economically feasible and commercially financeable manner that can be marketed to potential power purchasers.
- Develop land managed by the CSLC to generate revenue applied to the State.
- Assist California in generating power from renewable sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Comments

Alternatives Analyses

The Council supports alternatives to reduce the need for additional solar energy projects in the Mojave Desert. That alternative is rooftop solar. The City of Los Angeles has implemented a rooftop solar Feed-in Tariff (FiT) program, the largest of its kind in America. The FiT program enables the owners of large buildings to install solar panels on their roofs, and sell the power they generate back to utilities for distribution into the power grid. This approach puts the generation of electricity where the demand is greatest, in populated areas. It may also reduce transmission costs, greenhouse gas emissions from constructing energy projects far from the sources of power demand and materials for construction, the number of affected resources in the desert that must be analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and mitigation costs. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) should include analyses of where the energy generated by this project would be sent and the needs for energy in those targeted areas that may be satisfied by rooftop solar. We contend that rooftop solar should be analyzed as one of the action alternatives. B4-1

Another alternative would be to exchange/sell the land at the location of the proposed Project acquire land located in an area with fewer sensitive biological resource (e.g., areas previously used for agriculture could be acquired) and closer to where the demand for electricity is high. This would reduce mitigation costs and gen-tie costs.

The document should consider recently developed solar fields where soils have been bladed versus those facilities where the vegetation has been mowed and allowed to revegetate the area. In the latter case, it may be appropriate to allow tortoises to enter into the facilities and re-establish residency under the solar panels as vegetation recolonizes the area. The environmental documents should document recent successes and failures with this approach at other solar facilities in the desert. This option, which should be analyzed as an action alternative, could be designed as an experiment to add to the limited data on this approach to determine the extent of effects on Agassiz's desert tortoise populations and movements/connectivity.

Biological Surveys

The proposed Project is located in the range and habitat of the Mojave desert tortoise and near/adjacent to the Ord-Rodman population of the tortoise in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit (USFWS 2011) and Ord-Rodman designated critical habitat unit (USFWS 1994). We fully expect the EIR to include the results of focused surveys for the tortoise, rare plants, and rare animal species, whose ranges include the proposed Project area, including: B4-2

Reptiles
Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) – Federally Threatened, State Threatened, and considered by California Fish and Game Commission for uplisting to endangered

Birds
Bendire's thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*)
LeConte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*)
Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Mammals
American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)
Kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*)
Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*[1])

B4-2 cont.

The appropriate methodologies for surveys for specific taxa and biological resources are given in the following documents:

Desert tortoise (USFWS 2019)
Burrowing owl (CDFW 2012)
Rare plants (CDFG 2009)

Direct and Indirect Impacts

B4-3

The following direct and indirect impacts should be analyzed in the EIR with respect to the Mojave desert tortoise, tortoise habitat/critical habitat, and connectivity between tortoise populations.

Segmentation of Analysis: From the information provided in the NOP, the Calcite Substation is a proposed feature that is not included in this proposed Project. However, the NOP says the proposed gen-tie line would "carry the electricity generated by the solar facility to the regional transmission system interconnecting at a proposed 7-acre Southern California Edison Calcite Substation." We presume the proposed Project would not be feasible without the proposed Calcite Substation.

If this assumption is correct, the analysis of impacts in the EIR for the proposed Project should include all proposed interconnected features for the proposed Project to produce and deliver electricity to the CAISO transmission grid (e.g., Calcite Substation). We request this EIR analyze the impacts of the proposed Calcite Substation to the tortoise and its habitats.

In addition, the NOP does not indicate there is a utility that has committed to purchase the electricity produced by the proposed Project. We urge the CSLC and CPUC to provide assurances that the proposed Project will only be built when there are agreements with utilities to purchase the electricity generated and will accomplish the objectives of this proposed Project; that the Project be denied in the absence of this purchase agreement.

B4-4

Blocking Existing Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Routes: In reviewing Figure 1 of the attachment to the NOP, it appears the proposed Project will overlay an existing BLM open route (e.g., Lucerne Valley Cutoff). Installing security fencing around the proposed Project would block this existing route. This fence would likely result in OHV-users creating new access routes around the proposed Project. This would result in new direct and indirect impacts to the desert tortoise, its habitat, and other special status species in the area. These impacts should be analyzed in the EIR and appropriate action taken to prevent the degradation/loss of additional animals and habitat from these "detours" or new routes, and enforcement and restoration measures implemented to immediately correct these impacts, which would likely be ongoing.

[1] Although the site is outside the known range of Mohave ground squirrel, it lies within suitable habitats within only several miles of where the species was discovered in the late 1880's. Given the lack of focused surveys in the immediate area, we strongly encourage CDFW and/or CSLS, CPUC to require protocol trapping surveys [CDFG 2003 (revised 2010)] for the species.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Heat Sink Effect: PV solar projects have been documented as producing a "heat sink" to surrounding vegetation and wildlife habitats. The impacts from this heat sink should be discussed and analyzed in the EIR, especially with respect to the Mojave desert tortoise and its habitat. B4-5

Subsidizing Predators: From information provided in Figure 1, it appears the gen-tie line is located along the western boundary of the Ord-Rodman Tortoise Conservation Area and designated critical habitat unit for the tortoise. Construction and maintenance of powerlines may attract common ravens (*Corvus corax*), which are known predators of adult and juvenile desert tortoises. The towers/poles provide nest and perch sites for ravens and increase their numbers in the area of the powerline. In addition, powerlines require access roads for construction and maintenance. These roads provide access for off-highway vehicle (OHV) users, resulting in roadkill, poaching, vandalism, subsidized food source for ravens and coyotes (from roadkill), and an ongoing source of dust deposition on native plants. B4-6

Dust and Native Vegetation: Construction and maintenance activities and OHV activities result in increased wind erosion of soil and dust deposition, disruption of pollination systems, and the spread of invasive nonnative plant species both at the Project area and nearby areas. Adverse impacts to desert vegetation from dust deposition include increases in leaf temperatures and subsequent photosynthetic rates during early spring that may require an increased amount of water for growth and successful reproduction. If this increased amount of water is not available, these plant species may respond by reduced plant vigor, reduced flower and seed production, or abandoned reproduction for the year (USFWS 2014). Subsequent years of dust may result in no recruitment of plants or plant mortality. These impacts in turn adversely affect the breeding, feeding, sheltering, and connectivity requirements of the desert tortoise. These impacts should be analyzed in the EIR. B4-7

Non-native Invasive Plant Species: Non-native plant species, including *Bromus rubens, Bromus madritensis*, *Bromus tectorum*, *Schismus arabicus, Schismus barbatus*, *Salsola tragus*, and numerous mustard species (*Brassica* ssp., *Sisymbrium* ssp., *Descurainia sophia,* etc.) are some of the invasive species in many areas of the Mojave Desert. Vehicles travelling along roadways provide a conduit for the transport and establishment of these non-native species (Brooks and Matchett 2006). Once established, they outcompete native forbs resulting in a substantial reduction in the number/densities of native plants that the tortoise needs for adequate nutritional quality and quantity. This is due in part to their fast seed germination times in areas with disturbed soil surfaces/soil crusts. Further, they are benefitted by increased nitrogen deposition in soils from the exhaust from internal combustion engines (e.g., along roadways) (Allen et al. 2009). Once established, residual dried plants provide an enhanced fuel source to carry fires that degrade/destroy native desert vegetation that is not adapted to fire. As the impacts of climate change increase, one impact may be an increase in the occurrence, numbers, and densities of these non-native invasive plants. B4-8

The EIR should provide an analysis of how the proposed Project would contribute to the spread and proliferation of non-native invasive plant species; how this spread/proliferation would affect the Mojave desert tortoise and its habitats/critical habitat (including the frequency and size of human-caused fires and vegetation type conversion); and how the proposed Project may affect the likelihood of causing/contributing to human-caused fires. We strongly urge the Project Proponent to develop and implement a management and monitoring plan using this analysis and other relevant data that would reduce the transport to and spread of nonnative seeds and other plant propagules within the Project area and eliminate/reduce the likelihood of human-caused fires. The plan should integrate vegetation management with fire management and fire response.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Hazardous Materials: According to the NOP, there would be a battery storage facility up to 200 MW and 100 acres in size. The EIR should describe the type(s) of battery that would be used and the impacts to the tortoise/tortoise habitat from an accident or improper maintenance (e.g., lithium batteries cause a fire when not stored properly from high temperature or water). What are the impacts of the fire, ash, and smoke components to nearby vegetation, wildlife, and habitats? B4-9

Fires: Please see our comments under Hazardous Materials. In addition, several recent fires in California have been started by transmission lines. Battery storage facilities may be a source of explosions/fires. We request the EIR include a fire prevention plan in addition to a fire management plan specifically targeting methods to deal with fires produced by these batteries that cannot be suppressed with water, as well as sources of fuel (e.g., vehicles, etc.) and other hazardous materials on the Project site and gen-tie line. B4-10

Access Roads: We presume that access roads would be constructed and maintained for the gen-tie line. These new roads would have direct and indirect impacts form their construction and use by Project personnel and would be available for the public to use as new OHV routes. The impacts from these uses should be analyzed with respect to the tortoise and tortoise habitats. B4-11

To mitigate the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed Project to the Mojave desert tortoise and its habitat/critical habitat, the EIR should include the following mitigation plans for the solar field and the gen-tie line: B4-12

- Tortoise Translocation Plan (see USFWS 2020)
- Predator Management Plan (see USFWS 2010 for common ravens)
- Site plan for Soils and Hydrology
- Plant and Wildlife Species Conservation Measures Plan
- Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Plan (for temporary impacts)
- Vegetation/Invasive Plant Species Management Plan
- Access Road Management Plan
- Hazardous Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan
- Erosion, Dust Control, and Air Quality Plan
- Hazardous Materials Management Plan
- Fire Prevention and Protection Plan
- Waste Management Plan
- Habitat Restoration and Monitoring Plan (as part of the decommissioning process)

The mitigation plans should use the best available science with a commitment to implement the mitigation commensurate to impacts to the tortoise and its habitats. Mitigation should include:

- a fully-developed desert tortoise translocation plan that protects tortoise translocation area(s) from future development and human use/disturbance in perpetuity;
- erosion, dust control, and air quality plan to avoid the impacts of dust on desert vegetation;
- hazardous materials management plan to avoid contaminating tortoises and their habitats;
- predator management plan;

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

- non-native invasive plant species management plan;
- fire prevention plan;
- compensation plan for the degradation and loss of tortoise habitat that includes protection of the acquired, improved, and restored habitat in perpetuity for the tortoise from future development and human use; and,
- habitat restoration plan when the lease is terminated and the proposed Project is decommissioned.

B4-12 cont.

These science-based mitigation plans should include an implementation schedule that is tied to key actions of the construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the proposed Project so that mitigation occurs concurrently with or in advance of the impacts. The plans should specify success criteria, include a monitoring plan to collect data to determine whether success criteria have been met, and identify actions that would be required if the mitigation measures do not meet the success criteria.

Cumulative Impacts Analysis

Regarding cumulative impacts, the EIR should describe and analyze all proposed Project impacts within the region including future state, federal, and private actions affecting listed species on state, federal, and private lands. In particular, we ask that the relationship between the proposed Project and the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP; BLM 2016) and impacts to and from climate change be analyzed.

B4-13

To assist you with analysis of the impacts of the proposed Project to the Mojave desert tortoise and its habitat, we have provided information on the status and trend of the tortoise in an attachment, Appendix A – Status of the Mojave Desert Tortoise.

To mitigate for the cumulative impacts of the common raven to the tortoise from the proposed Project, the Project Proponent should contribute to the Common Raven Management Fund administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

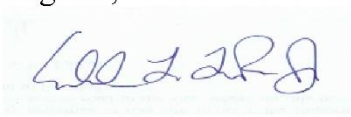
The proposed Project is located within 10 miles of a large translocation area where the U.S. Marine Corps recently translocated an unknown number of tortoises from their nearby, expanded training area. We feel that the Project Proponent must contact biologists at the 29 Palms U.S. Marine Corps base, which is clearly an Affected Interest, to ensure that this project does not adversely affect the success of their nearby translocation effort. Dr. Brian Henen is the appropriate person to contact at the base.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input and trust that our comments will help protect the Mojave desert tortoise and its habitat/critical habitat during any authorized project activities. Herein, we ask that the Desert Tortoise Council be identified as an Affected Interest for this and all other CSLC and CPUC projects that may affect the Mojave desert tortoise, and that any subsequent environmental documentation for this particular project is provided to us at the contact information listed above. We ask that you acknowledge receipt of this letter as soon as possible so we can be sure our concerns have been received by the appropriate parties.

B4-14

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Regards,



Edward L. LaRue, Jr., M.S.
Desert Tortoise Council, Ecosystems Advisory Committee, Chairperson

Attachment: Appendix A Status of the Mojave Desert Tortoise

cc (with attachment): California State Clearinghouse, state.clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

Literature Cited

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Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Appendix A

Status of the Mojave Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii)*

To assist the Agencies with their analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed Project on the Mojave desert tortoise, we provide the following information on its status and trend. B4-15

The Desert Tortoise Council (Council) has serious concerns about direct, indirect, and cumulative sources of human mortality for the Mojave desert tortoise given the status and trend of the species range-wide, within each of the five recovery units, within the Tortoise Conservation Areas (TCAs) that comprise each recovery unit.

Densities of Adult Mojave Desert Tortoises: A few years after listing the Mojave desert tortoise under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a Recovery Plan for the Mojave desert tortoise (USFWS 1994a). It contained a detailed population viability analysis. In this analysis, the minimum viable density of a Mojave desert tortoise population is 10 adult tortoises per mile^2 (3.9 adult tortoises per km2). This assumed a male-female ratio of 1:1 (USFWS 1994a, page C25) and certain areas of habitat with most of these areas geographically linked by adjacent borders or corridors of suitable tortoise habitat. Populations of Mojave desert tortoises with densities below this amount are in danger of extinction (USFWS 1994a, page 32). The revised recovery plan (USFWS 2011) designated five recovery units for the Mojave desert tortoise that are intended to conserve genetic, behavioral, and morphological diversity necessary for the recovery of the entire listed species (Allison and McLuckie 2018).

Range-wide, densities of adult Mojave desert tortoises declined more than 32% between 2004 and 2014 (Table 1) (USFWS 2015). At the recovery unit level, between 2004 and 2014, densities of adult desert tortoises declined, on average, in every recovery unit except the Northeastern Mojave (Table 1). Adult densities in the Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit increased 3.1% per year (SE = 4.3%), while the other four recovery units declined at different annual rates: Colorado Desert (4.5%, SE = 2.8%), Upper Virgin River (3.2%, SE = 2.0%), Eastern Mojave (11.2%, SE = 5.0%), and Western Mojave (7.1%, SE = 3.3%)(Allison and McLuckie 2018). However, the small area and low starting density of the tortoises in the Northeastern Mojave Recovery Unit (lowest density of all Recovery Units) resulted in a small overall increase in the number of adult tortoises by 2014 (Allison and McLuckie 2018). In contrast, the much larger areas of the Eastern Mojave, Western Mojave, and Colorado Desert recovery units, plus the higher estimated initial densities in these areas, explained much of the estimated total loss of adult tortoises since 2004 (Allison and McLuckie 2018).

At the population level, represented by tortoises in the TCAs, densities of 10 of 17 monitored populations of the Mojave desert tortoise declined from 26% to 64% and 11 have a density that is less than 3.9 adult tortoises per km2 (USFWS 2015). The Chuckwalla population is near the proposed Project and has a population below the minimum viable density, and an 11-year declining trend (-37.4%)(USFWS 2015). We are concerned that the proposed Project would bring additional indirect and cumulative impacts to this population and its density and trend would further decline.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

B4-15 cont.

Population Data on Mojave Desert Tortoise: The Mojave desert tortoise was listed as threatened under the FESA in 1990. The listing was warranted because of ongoing population declines throughout the range of the tortoise from multiple human-caused activities. Since the listing, the status of the species has changed. Population numbers (abundance) and densities continue to decline substantially (please see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of 10-year trend data for 5 Recovery Units and 17 Critical Habitat Units (CHU)/Tortoise Conservation Areas (TCA) for Agassiz's desert tortoise, *Gopherus agassizii* (=Mojave desert tortoise). The table includes the area of each Recovery Unit and Critical Habitat Unit (CHU)/Tortoise Conservation Area (TCA), percent of total habitat for each Recovery Unit and Critical Habitat Unit/Tortoise Conservation Areas, density (number of breeding adults/km2 and standard errors = SE), and the percent change in population density between 2004-2014. Populations below the viable level of 3.9 breeding individuals/km^2 (10 breeding individuals per mi^2) (assumes a 1:1 sex ratio) and showing a decline from 2004 to 2014 are in red (USFWS 2015).

Recovery Unit Designated Critical Habitat Unit/Tortoise Conservation Area	Surveyed area (km^2)	% of total habitat area in Recovery Unit & CHU/TCA	2014 density/km^2 (SE)	% 10-year change (2004–2014)
Western Mojave, CA	**6,294**	**24.51**	**2.8 (1.0)**	**–50.7 decline**
Fremont-Kramer	2,347	9.14	2.6 (1.0)	–50.6 decline
Ord-Rodman	852	3.32	3.6 (1.4)	–56.5 decline
Superior-Cronese	3,094	12.05	2.4 (0.9)	–61.5 decline
Colorado Desert, CA	**11,663**	**45.42**	**4.0 (1.4)**	**–36.25 decline**
Chocolate Mtn AGR, CA	713	2.78	7.2 (2.8)	–29.77 decline
Chuckwalla, CA	2,818	10.97	3.3 (1.3)	–37.43 decline
Chemehuevi, CA	3,763	14.65	2.8 (1.1)	–64.70 decline
Fenner, CA	1,782	6.94	4.8 (1.9)	–52.86 decline
Joshua Tree, CA	1,152	4.49	3.7 (1.5)	+178.62 increase
Pinto Mtn, CA	508	1.98	2.4 (1.0)	–60.30 decline
Piute Valley, NV	927	3.61	5.3 (2.1)	+162.36 increase
Northeastern Mojave	**4,160**	**16.2**	**4.5 (1.9)**	**+325.62 increase**
Beaver Dam Slope, NV, UT, AZ	750	2.92	6.2 (2.4)	+370.33 increase
Coyote Spring, NV	960	3.74	4.0 (1.6)	+ 265.06 increase
Gold Butte, NV & AZ	1,607	6.26	2.7 (1.0)	+ 384.37 increase
Mormon Mesa, NV	844	3.29	6.4 (2.5)	+ 217.80 increase

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

Eastern Mojave, NV & CA	**3,446**	**13.42**	**1.9 (0.7)**	**–67.26 decline**
El Dorado Valley, NV	999	3.89	1.5 (0.6)	–61.14 decline
Ivanpah, CA	2,447	9.53	2.3 (0.9)	–56.05 decline
Upper Virgin River	**115**	**0.45**	**15.3 (6.0)**	**–26.57 decline**
Red Cliffs Desert	115	0.45	15.3 (6.0)	–26.57 decline
Total amount of land	**25,678**	**100.00**		**–32.18 decline**

B4-15 cont.

Density of Juvenile Mojave Desert Tortoises: Survey results indicate that the proportion of juvenile desert tortoises has been decreasing in all five recovery units since 2007 (Allison and McLuckie 2018). The probability of encountering a juvenile tortoise was consistently lowest in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit. Allison and McLuckie (2018) provided reasons for the decline in juvenile desert tortoises in all recovery units. These included decreased food availability for adult female tortoises resulting in reduced clutch size, decreased food availability resulting in increased mortality of juvenile tortoises, prey switching by coyotes from mammals to tortoises, and increased abundance of common ravens that typically prey on smaller desert tortoises.

Declining adult densities through 2014 have left the Western Mojave adult numbers at 49% (a 51% decline of their 2004 levels (Allison and McLuckie 2018, USFWS 2015). Such steep declines in the density of adults are only sustainable if there were suitably large improvements in reproduction and juvenile growth and survival. However, the proportion of juveniles has not increased anywhere in the range of the Mojave desert tortoise since 2007, and in the Mojave Recovery Unit the proportion of juveniles in 2014 declined to 91% (a 9 % decline) of their representation in 2004 (Allison and McLuckie 2018).

Abundance of Mojave Desert Tortoises: Allison and McLuckie (2018) noted that because the area available to tortoises (i.e., tortoise habitat and linkage areas between habitats) is decreasing, trends in tortoise density no longer capture the magnitude of decreases in abundance. Hence, they reported on the change in abundance or numbers of the Mojave desert tortoises in each recovery unit (Table 2). They noted that these estimates in abundance are likely higher than actual numbers of tortoises and the changes in abundance (i.e., decrease in numbers) are likely lower than actual numbers because of their habitat calculation method. They used area estimates that removed only impervious surfaces created by development as cities in the desert expanded. They did not consider degradation and loss of habitat from other sources, such as the recent expansion of military operations (753.4 km2 so far on Fort Irwin and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center), intense or large scale fires (e.g., 576.2 km2 of critical habitat that burned in 2005), development of utility-scale solar facilities (so far 194 km2 have been permitted) (USFWS 2016), or other sources of degradation or loss of habitat (e.g., recreation, mining, grazing, infrastructure, etc.). Thus, the declines in abundance of Mojave desert tortoise are likely greater than those reported in Table 2.

Habitat Availability: Data on population density or abundance does not indicate population viability. The area of protected habitat or reserves for the subject species is a crucial part of the viability analysis along with data on density, abundance, and other population parameters. In the Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan (USFWS 1994a), the analysis of population viability included population density and size of reserves (i.e., areas managed for the desert

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

B4-15 cont.

tortoise) and population numbers (abundance) and size of reserves. The USFWS Recovery Plan reported that as population densities for the Mojave desert tortoise decline, reserve sizes must increase, and as population numbers (abundance) for the Mojave desert tortoise decline, reserve sizes must increase (USFWS 1994a). In 1994, reserve design (USFWS 1994a) and designation of critical habitat (USFWS 1994b) were based on the population viability analysis from numbers

Table 2. Estimated change in abundance of adult Mojave desert tortoises in each recovery unit between 2004 and 2014 (Allison and McLuckie 2018). Decreases in abundance are in red.

Recovery Unit	Modeled Habitat (km^2)	2004 Abundance	2014 Abundance	Change in Abundance	Percent Change in Abundance
Western Mojave	23,139	131,540	64,871	-66,668	-51%
Colorado Desert	18,024	103,675	66,097	-37,578	-36%
Northeastern Mojave	10,664	12,610	46,701	34,091	270%
Eastern Mojave	16,061	75,342	24,664	-50,679	-67%
Upper Virgin River	613	13,226	10,010	-3,216	-24%
Total	**68,501**	**336,393**	**212,343**	**-124,050**	**-37%**

(abundance) and densities of populations of the Mojave desert tortoise in the early 1990s. Inherent in this analysis is that the lands be managed with reserve level protection (USFWS 1994a, page 36) or ecosystem protection as described in section 2(b) of the FESA, and that sources of mortality be reduced so recruitment exceeds mortality (that is, lambda > 1)(USFWS 1994a, page C46).

Habitat loss would also disrupt the prevailing population structure of this widely distributed species with geographically limited dispersal (isolation by distance; Murphy et al. 2007; Hagerty and Tracy 2010). Allison and McLuckie (2018) anticipate an additional impact of this habitat loss/degradation is decreasing resilience of local tortoise populations by reducing demographic connections to neighboring populations (Fahrig 2007). Military and commercial operations and infrastructure projects that reduce tortoise habitat in the desert are anticipated to continue (Allison and McLuckie 2018) as are other sources of habitat loss/degradation.

Allison and McLuckie (2018) reported that the life history of the Mojave desert tortoise puts it at greater risk from even slightly elevated adult mortality (Congdon et al. 1993; Doak et al. 1994), and recovery from population declines will require more than enhancing adult survivorship (Spencer et al. 2017). The negative population trends in most of the TCAs for the Mojave desert tortoise indicate that this species is on the path to extinction under current conditions (Allison and McLuckie 2018). They state that their results are a call to action to remove ongoing threats to tortoises from TCAs, and possibly to contemplate the role of human activities outside TCAs and their impact on tortoise populations inside them.

Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

B4-15 cont.

Densities, numbers, and habitat for the Mojave desert tortoise declined between 2004 and 2014. As reported in the population viability analysis, to improve the status of the Mojave desert tortoise, reserves (area of protected habitat) must be established and managed. When densities of tortoises decline, the area of protected habitat must increase. When the abundance of tortoises declines, the area of protected habitat must increase. We note that the Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan was released in 1994 and its report on population viability and reserve design was reiterated in the 2011 Revised Recovery Plan as needing to be updated with current population data (USFWS 2011, p. 83). With lower population densities and abundance, a revised population viability analysis would show the need for greater areas of habitat to receive reserve level of management for the Mojave desert tortoise. In addition, we note that none of the recovery actions that are fundamental tenets of conservation biology has been implemented throughout most or all of the range of the Mojave desert tortoise.

Definition of an Endangered Species: In 2011, Murphy et al. stated that the "recognition of G. morafkai reduces the range of G. agassizii to occupying about 30% of its former range." Given this reduction in species distribution and numbers and the "…drastic population declines in G. agassizii during the past few decades, it might be endangered."

In 2018, Agassiz's desert tortoise was added to the list of the world's most endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles. It is in the top 50 species. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Species Survival Commission, Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, now considers Agassiz's desert tortoise to be Critically Endangered (Turtle Conservation Coalition 2018).

The IUCN places a taxon in the Critically Endangered category when the best available evidence indicates that it meets one or more of the criteria for Critically Endangered. These criteria are 1) population decline - a substantial (>80 percent) reduction in population size in the last 10 years; 2) geographic decline - a substantial reduction in extent of occurrence, area of occupancy, area/extent, or quality of habitat, and severe fragmentation of occurrences; 3) small population size with continued declines; 4) very small population size; and 5) analysis showing the probability of extinction in the wild is at least 50 percent within 10 years or three generations.

In the FESA, Congress defined an "endangered species" as "any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range…" Given the information on the status of the Mojave desert tortoise and the federal definition of an endangered species, the Council believes the status of the Mojave desert tortoise is that of an endangered species.

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Comment Set B4 – Desert Tortoise Council (cont.)

B4-15 cont.

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Comment Set B5 – Mojave Desert Land Trust

P.O. Box 544 . 60124 Twentynine Palms Highway . Joshua Tree, CA 92252

Sarah Mongano
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Sacramento, CA 95825
CEQA.comments@slc.ca.gov

November 12, 2020

Subject: Stagecoach Solar Project. Lucerne Valley, San Bernardino County
File Ref: SCH No. 2020100234 CSLC EIR No. 763; W30213; W26868

Dear Ms. Mongano:

I am writing to you today as the Executive Director of the Mojave Desert Land Trust, a nonprofit conservation organization based in Joshua Tree which has acquired nearly 90,000 acres of desert conservation land, including wildlife corridors, across the Mojave and eastern Colorado Deserts. Our mission is to protect the Mojave and Colorado Desert ecosystems and their natural, cultural, and scenic resource values.

We appreciate the opportunity to give input on the scoping process for the proposed Stagecoach Solar project. As you are aware, Aurora Solar has submitted an application with CSLC for the lease of state lands to construct a 3,000-acre utility scale solar project including a 9.1-mile 220 kV transmission line. Additionally, the project includes a new regional Calcite substation to be operated by Southern California Edison.

The project site location encompasses undisturbed, pristine Mojave Desert ecosystem land located east of Highway 247, south of Stoddard Ridge, west of Black Mountain and north of Sidewinder Mountain.

A primary concern we have about the proposed project, is that it would significantly encroach on a wildlife corridor identified in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). This encroachment could have unacceptable effects on numerous special status species. **B5-1**

Land use changes can function as barriers to wildlife through the removal and fragmentation of natural vegetation. Solar installations can result in the loss of habitat over very large areas and their support facilities, i.e., substations and transmission lines increase these impacts. Habitat loss and fragmentation decreases the abundance and diversity of native species, while promoting displacement of natives by

Comment Set B5 – Mojave Desert Land Trust (cont.)

nonnative species.[1] The best ways to manage industrial impacts within a wildlife linkage are avoidance and careful site selection.

B5-1 cont.

The proposed large-scale solar project is situated within a Desert Linkage Network [DRECP], Fig.1, and surrounded by Stoddard Ridge, Black Mountain, Sidewinder Mountain and Highway 247.

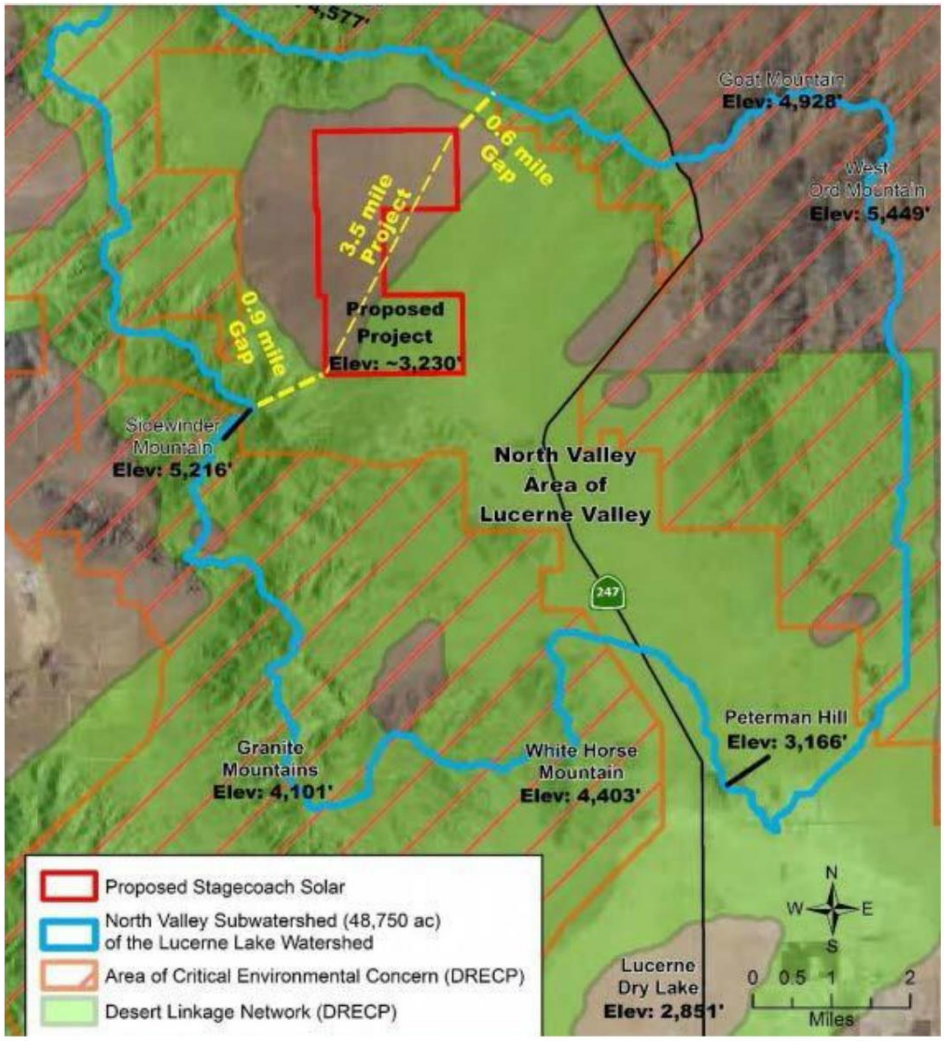

Fig. 1. ACEC and Wildlife Linkage Design. Credit: B. Hammer.

Of particular note is identification of The Ord Mountains and Lucerne Valley as an evolutionary hotspot with "high genetic diversity" present in several different wildlife species (Vandergast et al., 2013). These

[1] Penrod, K., P. Beier, E. Garding, and C. Cabañero. 2012. A Linkage Network for the California Deserts. Produced for the Bureau of Land Management and The Wildlands Conservancy. Produced by Science and Collaboration for Connected Wildlands, Fair Oaks, CA www.scwildlands.org and Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona http://oak.ucc.nau.edu/pb1/.

Comment Set B5 – Mojave Desert Land Trust (cont.)

B5-1 cont.

evolutionary hotspots function as protection for future evolutionary potential and provide genetic diversity that is critical for species' adaptation to changing conditions such as climate change. Low diversity increases susceptibility to local extirpation.[2]

The Desert Linkage Map [Fig. 2] illustrates the extensive corridor network within the proposed Stagecoach site area. Lucerne Valley provides important connectivity from the San Bernardino Mountains north through the basins and ranges connecting with China Lake North Range and the southern Sierra. Several special status species are found within this region, including the desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, golden eagle, red-tailed hawk, Le Conte's thrasher, and Bendire's thrasher. In total, 11 special status plants and animals have been noted in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. Moreover, as the NOP map confirms [Fig. 1], the proposed site area is surrounded by designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), areas set aside as core habitat for potentially affected species.

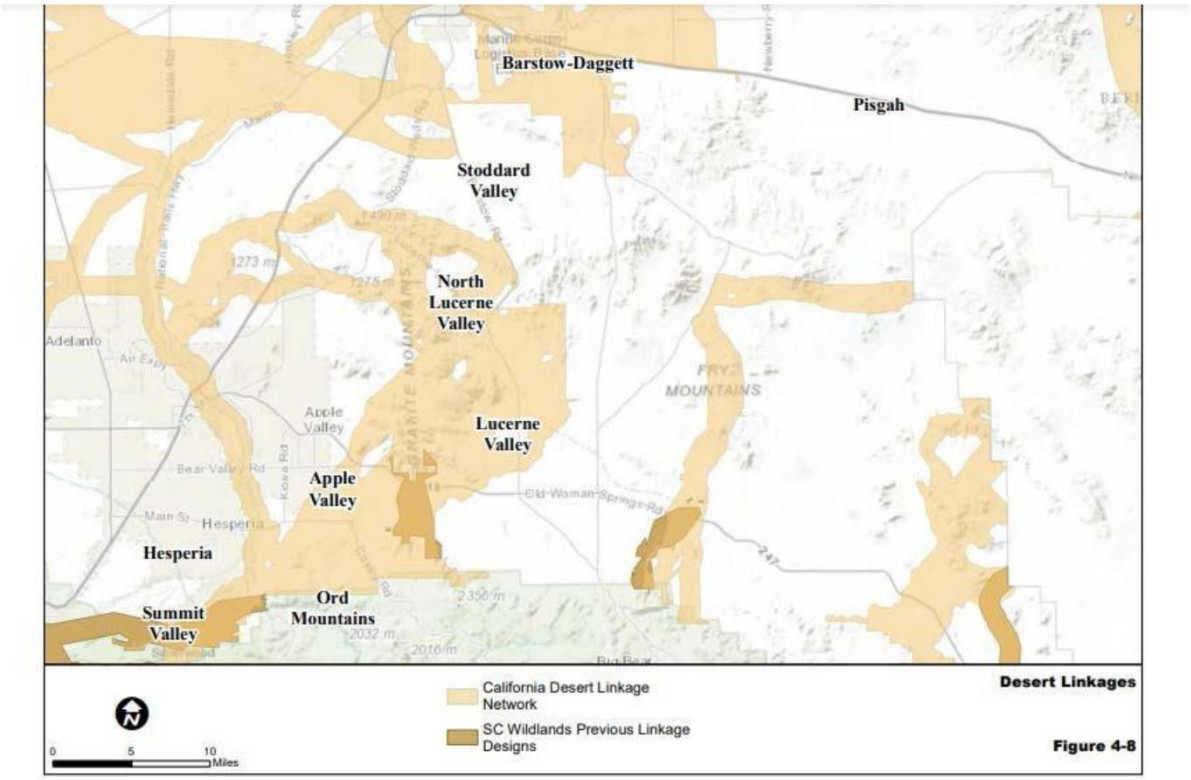

Fig. 2. California Desert Linkage Network. MEA Assessment Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project. CPUC. April 2016.

The proposed Gen-Tie route would run between the Granite Mountains and the Ord Mountains. This route is of concern in that per the DRECP, the Granite Mountain Wildlife Linkage, described as

[2] Master Environmental Assessment [MEA]. Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project. Section 4: Biological Resources. California Public Utilities Commission. April 2016. https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/aspen/cltp/MEA/4_Biological%20Resources.pdf

Comment Set B5 – Mojave Desert Land Trust (cont.)

sandwiched between Lucerne Valley and Apple Valley and including Granite Mountain, warrants new ROW proposals not interfere with or inhibit wildlife crossing and movement through the area. Moreover, the BLM advised that renewable energy is not an allowable use within the Granite Mountain corridor as renewable energy is not compatible with National Landscape Conservation System and ACEC unit values and criteria.[3]

B5-1 cont.

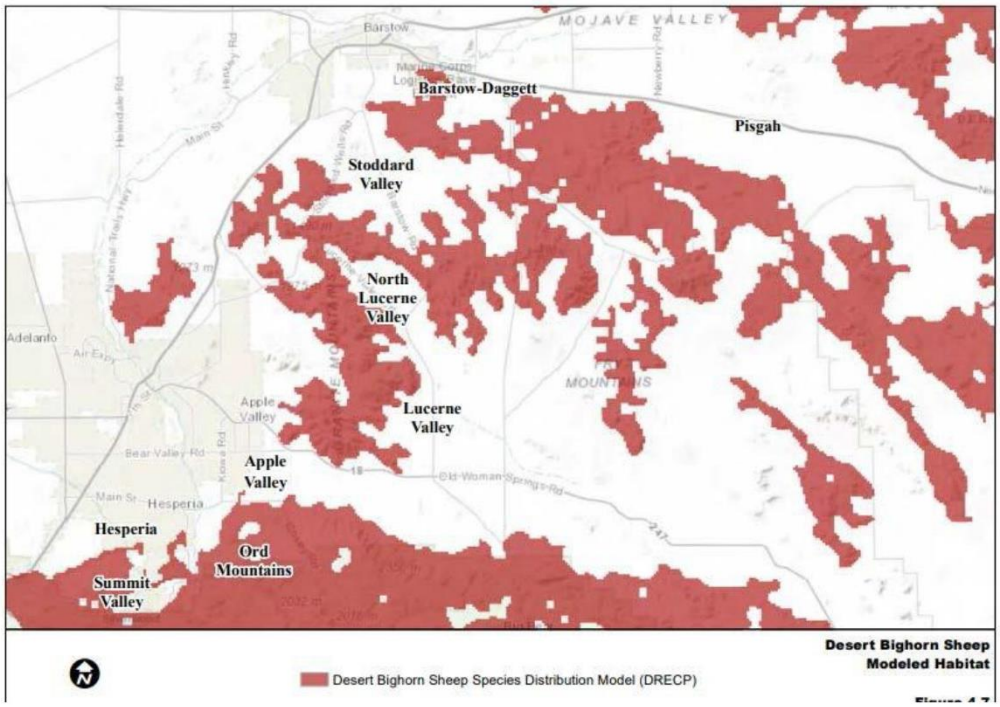

Figure 3 - Distribution Model. Desert Bighorn Sheep. MEA Assessment Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project. CPUC. April 2016.

A second significant concern we have is the potential overdraft of groundwater. The project proposal area is located on the Este Sub-basin and directly in the middle of the groundwater sub-basin referred to as the"North Valley Subwatershed" of the Lucerne Lake Watershed Area. This already overused basin would be tapped into to provide enormous amounts of water for construction and operations of the project. The proposed application indicates that construction alone will use approximately 1,200-acre feet to suppress dust and move earth. On-site operations are estimated at 46-acre feet per year, with no amount disclosed for ongoing dust suppression.

B5-2

[3] 4.Bureau of Land Management. Draft EIR/EIS. Appendix L. https://www.fws.gov/carlsbad/palmsprings/DRECP/Appendix%20L_Bureau%20of%20Land%20Management%20Worksheets/Appendix%20L_BLM%20Worksheets%20-%20ACEC_Part8_1.pdf

Comment Set B5 – Mojave Desert Land Trust (cont.)

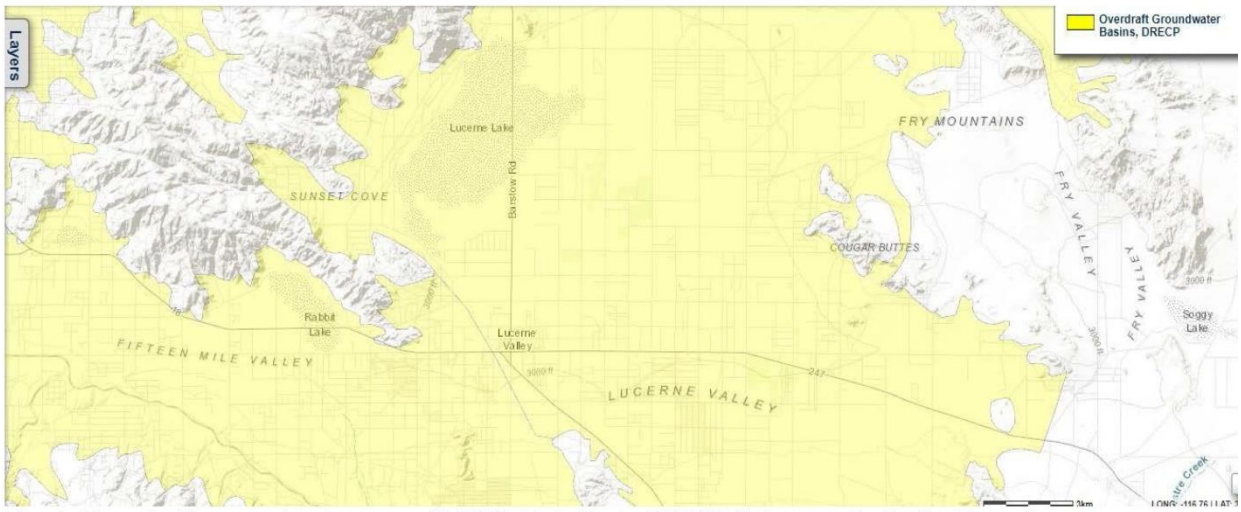

Fig. 4. Overdraft groundwater map, DRECP. DataBasin DRECP Gateway. Indicated in yellow.

B5-2 cont.

As the DRECP draft map indicates, all High Desert Development Focus Area's are located within already over drafted groundwater basins, including Lucerne Valley's. Increased usage of water within the basin is anticipated to exacerbate the impacts created by overdraw and declining groundwater levels. This could affect human settlements and springs in the area. There is a clear link between the sustainability of underground aquifers and the capacity of desert springs to support the arid ecosystem's biological resources.

B5-3

We request that the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) consider alternatives which avoid impacts to designated wildlife corridors and avoid or significantly reduce impacts to the aquifer. We also ask that the DEIR it thoroughly examine and fully address the potentially significant effects of the project on all of the listed and special status species in the project area.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation and for your consideration of our comments. We welcome the opportunity for further input and discussion.

Sincerely,

Geary Hund
Executive Director
Mojave Desert Land Trust

Comment Set B6 – Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association

LUCERNE VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (LVEDA)

To: **By Email: Sarah.Mongano@slc.ca.gov**
and CEQA.comments@slc.ca.gov
Ms. Sarah Mongano
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From: Chuck Bell, Pres. 760 964 3118 chuckb@sisp.net
P. O. Box 193 Lucerne Valley, CA 92356

Date: Nov. 13, 2020

RE: STAGECOACH SOLAR NOP – LUCERNE VALLEY

LVEDA signed on the "coalition" letter and incorporates it by reference. It says it all! We also participated in the NOP phone meeting. **B6-1**

We support community and backyard based solar – not industrial projects. The applicant does not have a power/purchase agreement – SCE wants no more renewable energy until at least 2030 - therefore this project is speculative and should not be advancing. We are still paying other states to take surplus solar energy during summer months. **B6-2**

SCENIC HWY 247 (BARSTOW RD.): The project's scenic interference/disruption (both site and transmission line) would likely eliminate more than 15-20 miles of potential State Scenic designation – a process that community reps. have been working on for many years – with our proposal recently submitted to both Caltrans and San Bernardino County. There is no way to mitigate it – and don't embarrass yourselves by agreeing to plant oleanders along the fence line. (Significant Impact). **B6-3**

CALCITE SUBSTATION: The project's dependence on SCE's proposed Calcite Substation would trigger and expedite its construction – in turn allowing other **B6-4**

Comment Set B6 – Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association (cont.)

solar projects currently filed and under County jurisdiction to potentially hook up to it – definitely a 'growth inducing' impact. (Significant Impact). B6-4 cont.

TORTOISE: Wipe out of the site's prime tortoise impact can be only mitigated on paper – but translocations and off-site 'compensation' have not been effective and tortoise populations are in decline throughout the Mojave Desert. (Significant Impact). B6-5

FUGITIVE DUST/AIR QUALITY: Short of hand-work – not mechanical - placing panels within the spacing of creosote bushes and maintaining them in place – there is absolutely no way to mitigate dirt blow-off and downwind PM 10/2.5 violations. Nothing has worked at any solar site we are aware of – no amount of water works. It will happen and plumes of dust/flying dirt will occur during and for some time after construction. Mowing and leaving vegetation roots in place is only marginal mitigation. Dirt will still fly off the site. Construction during low wind months (summer/fall) can help mitigate. There is no MDAQMD downwind air quality monitoring sites (maybe a Purple Air Monitor) to provide a base for current air quality background – therefore no way to measure the project's definite impact. (Significant Impact). B6-6

WATER USE: Our groundwater basin is severely over-drafted and adjudicated. The project will probably only be able to obtain 10 ac' of construction water from the Mojave Water Agency's Morongo (State Water) Pipeline that runs through the community about 15 miles to the south – with turnouts available for construction projects. The coalition letter states how much water will be required for construction – in addition to what the illegal 250 +/- marijuana farms are taking with no permits. Our "Severely Disadvantaged Community" – with most residents on private wells – impacted by this and other cumulative water uses – legal or not – with no or little outside funding available to deepen/drill new wells - should not have to be subjected to industrial solar projects taking our water with no local benefit to our community. (Significant Impact). B6-7

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: See our coalition letter comments re: EJ. (We appreciate State Lands staff asking for our response to it – especially since SB County did not include Lucerne Valley as an "EJ Community"). Our "Severely Disadvantaged Community" status – especially the very low income of our rural residents adjacent to the project site and transmission corridor – warrants special B6-8

Comment Set B6 – Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association (cont.)

attention in the EIR. We have heard (so far – only by word of mouth) from said residents that no one supports the project nor is granting a r/w for the transmission line through their private properties. They are all low-income and can't afford to move. Our experience with the two existing industrial solar projects along Camprock Rd. in Lucerne Valley – we can't determine property de-valuations since no buyers want to buy – evidence in and by itself. Stagecoach is an INDUSTRIAL project in the midst of "rural residential" – it doesn't fit – especially what it will do to its residences. CONDEMNATION – IF REQUIRED – TO CONSTRUCT THE POWER LINE THROUGH THE COMMUNITY's PRIVATE PARCELS SOUTH TO THE PROPOSED CALCITE SUBSTATION – CERTAINLY WILL BE A FIGHT. (Significant Impact). B6-9

Comment Set B7 – Defenders of Wildlife

California Program Office
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1730 | Sacramento, California 95814 | tel 916.313.5800
www.defenders.org

November 13, 2020

Sarah Mongano
Senior Environmental Scientist
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South
Sacramento, CA 95825
Sent via Email: CEQA.comments@slc.ca.gov

Re: Stagecoach Solar Project NOP Comments

Dear Ms. Mongano:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments on the proposed Stagecoach Solar Project (Project). This scoping comment letter is submitted by Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) on behalf of its 1.8 million members and supporters in the U.S., including 279,000 in California.

Defenders is a national conservation organization founded in 1947 and dedicated to protecting all wild animals and plants in their natural communities. To this end, we employ science, public education and participation, media, legislative advocacy, litigation, and proactive on-the-ground solutions to impede the accelerating rate of extinction.

Brief description of the Project

The Project is a photovoltaic generation facility located on undeveloped state land under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission (SLC) in the northeastern portion of Lucerne Valley, San Bernardino County, California. In addition, the project would involve the use of 640 acres of private land owned by Aurora Solar, LLC, the Project applicant. It would produce up to 200 megawatts and includes battery storage, associated infrastructure and a 9.1 mile-long gen-tie line that would deliver electricity to the Calcite Substation in Lucerne Valley that is proposed by the Southern California Edison Company (SCE). The Project application area is approximately 3,000 acres, with photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure located on approximately 1,950 acres.

Scoping comments

Defenders submits the following scoping comments on the scope and content of the environmental impact report (EIR) for the Project.

National Headquarters | 1130 17th Street, N.W. | Washington, D.C. 20036-4604 | tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331 | **www.defenders.org**

Comment Set B7 – Defenders of Wildlife (cont.)

B7-1

1. **Affected environment**: Defenders is primarily interested in the effects of the Project on biological resources. Regarding these resources, the NOP states "*The EIR will examine potential construction impacts (e.g., permanent loss or temporary disturbance to vegetation and wildlife habitat) as well as operational impacts (e.g., wildlife mortality from vehicle operation within the solar field). The EIR will also examine proposed Project activities on federally or State-listed species or species proposed for listing; conflicts with any local policies on biological resources; and any conflicts with local, regional, or State habitat conservation plans.*"

Defenders recommends that the description of the affected biological resources environment be based on systematic surveys performed on and adjacent to the Project site for the following species:

A. **Agassizii's desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*):** The Project is within the range of Agassizii's desert tortoise (tortoise), a species listed as threatened by the Fish and Game Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Project is located within a mapped habitat linkage for the tortoise that connects populations in the Fremont-Kramer and Ord-Rodman Critical Habitat Units. A map showing this linkage and the critical habitat units is available here:
https://databasin.org/maps/new#datasets=df8194c0ea964312ac4bcf6a1c923cbc
Surveys of the Project site and adjacent lands should follow wildlife agency approved techniques, such as those published by the USFWS and available on the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office website:
https://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/dt/dt_auth_form.htm.

   The EIR for the Project should analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to the tortoise, with an emphasis on its population and habitats within the Western Mojave Recovery Unit. Based on USFWS annual surveys, the adult desert tortoise population in the Western Mojave Recovery Unit has declined by over 50% between 2004 and 2014, and is currently below minimum viable density. Up to date information on the status and trend of the desert tortoise rangewide and within the Western Mojave Recovery Unit is available on the Desert Tortoise Recovery Office website:
https://www.fws.gov/nevada/desert_tortoise/dtro/dtro_monitor.html.

   We anticipate that impacts to the tortoise will require mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize impacts, and require compensation for significant and unavoidable impacts. We recommend that SLC staff involved in preparing the Project EIR contact the Regional Manager of the Inland Deserts Region of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as early as possible to seek support and guidance on addressing the effects of the Project on the tortoise. In October 2020, the Fish and Game Commission determined that the species may warrant listing as endangered rather than threatened based on a petition submitted by Defenders, the Desert Tortoise Council and Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee; and a formal review of the adequacy of the petition by staff experts at the CDFW.

B. **Additional special status species:** In addition to the desert tortoise, we recommend that the EIR include an analysis of impacts and mitigation measures for special status species likely to occur within the Project site, and that appropriate science-based or CDFW-

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Comment Set B7 – Defenders of Wildlife (cont.)

approved survey techniques be conducted to assess their extent, location and abundance relative to the Project. The following additional special status species should be addressed:

- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)
- Bendire's thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*)
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*)
- Desert kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis arsipus*)
- Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)

B7-1 cont.

2. **Alternatives**: Alternatives to the Project will be especially important if field surveys document the presence of a significant number of tortoises on the site. Adverse impacts to the tortoise, a threatened species, must be fully mitigated under CEQA and the corresponding Fish and Game Code. Alternatives may require modification of the Project footprint, leaving natural vegetation on site rather than complete removal through blading or crushing, and moving the Project to previously disturbed lands, including those in a location different from the proposed Project.

B7-2

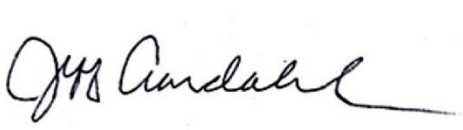
3. **Interagency coordination**: We recommend that staff from the SLC contact the Field Manager of the Barstow Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to discuss the project and obtain any special concerns or needs the BLM may have in management of the public lands adjacent to the Project that may be indirectly affected by the Project. In addition, we recommend that the SLC contact staff from the town of Apple Valley, California, CDFW and USFWS, regarding their plans to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and/or Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), which may extend to a sphere of influence well outside the town administrative boundary that includes the Project site as proposed conservation lands as part of the developing NCCP/HCP.

B7-3

Conclusion

Defenders hopes our scoping comments are useful to the SLC in preparing a Draft EIR for the Project. Please contact either of us if you would like to discuss our comments or have any questions.

Sincerely,



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