

Appendix A

Initial Study and Notice of Preparation and
Responses

Notice of Preparation

To: Office of Planning & Research
(Agency)

P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212
(Address)

Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

Lead Agency:

Consulting Firm (If applicable):

Agency Name Imperial County, Planning & Dev Svcs.

Firm Name HDR

Street Address 801 Main Street

Street Address 591 Camino de la Reina, Suite 300

City/State/Zip El Centro, CA 92243

City/State/Zip San Diego, CA 92108

Contact David Black

Contact Tim Gnibus

The County of Imperial will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the Environmental Information, which is germane to your agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study is attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 35 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Imperial County Planning & Development Services, Attn: David Black at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project

Project Location: The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel No. [APN] 034-160-002) in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA. The site is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern-most edge of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of the City of Brawley; and approximately 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland. The solar energy facility site is located directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile west of the Westside Main Canal. The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

The proposed project includes an approximately 4-mile electrical generator intertie (gen-tie) transmission line that would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District’s (IID) existing 161 kilovolt (kV) “L” Line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area. The gen-tie route begins at the northwest corner of the solar facility site, heads west approximately 0.5 miles on BLM land, then north for approximately 1 mile, and then west for 2.5 miles along Garvey Road where it would connect to IID’s 161 kV “L” Line.

Project Description (brief): The project applicant, Apex Energy Solutions, LLC, proposes to construct and operate an 80 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar facility with an integrated 160 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned land. The proposed project would be comprised of solar PV

arrays panels, an on-site substation, BESS, gen tie-line, inverters, transformers, underground electrical cables, and access roads.


The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy (RE) Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects with an approved conditional use permit (CUP). CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. The entire project site (APN 034-160-002) is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

Implementation of the project requires an amendment to the County’s General Plan Renewable Energy and Transmission Element, Zone Change, and approval of a CUP, as described below:

- **General Plan Amendment:** The applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment to include/classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone. No change in the underlying General Plan land use (Agriculture) is proposed.
- **Zone Change:** The project site is currently zoned Open Space/Preservation (S-2). The applicant is requesting a Zone Change to classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone to allow for solar and battery storage development.
- **Conditional Use Permit:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of a CUP by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated battery storage system on land zoned S-2.
- **Water Supply Assessment:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of the Water Supply Assessment.

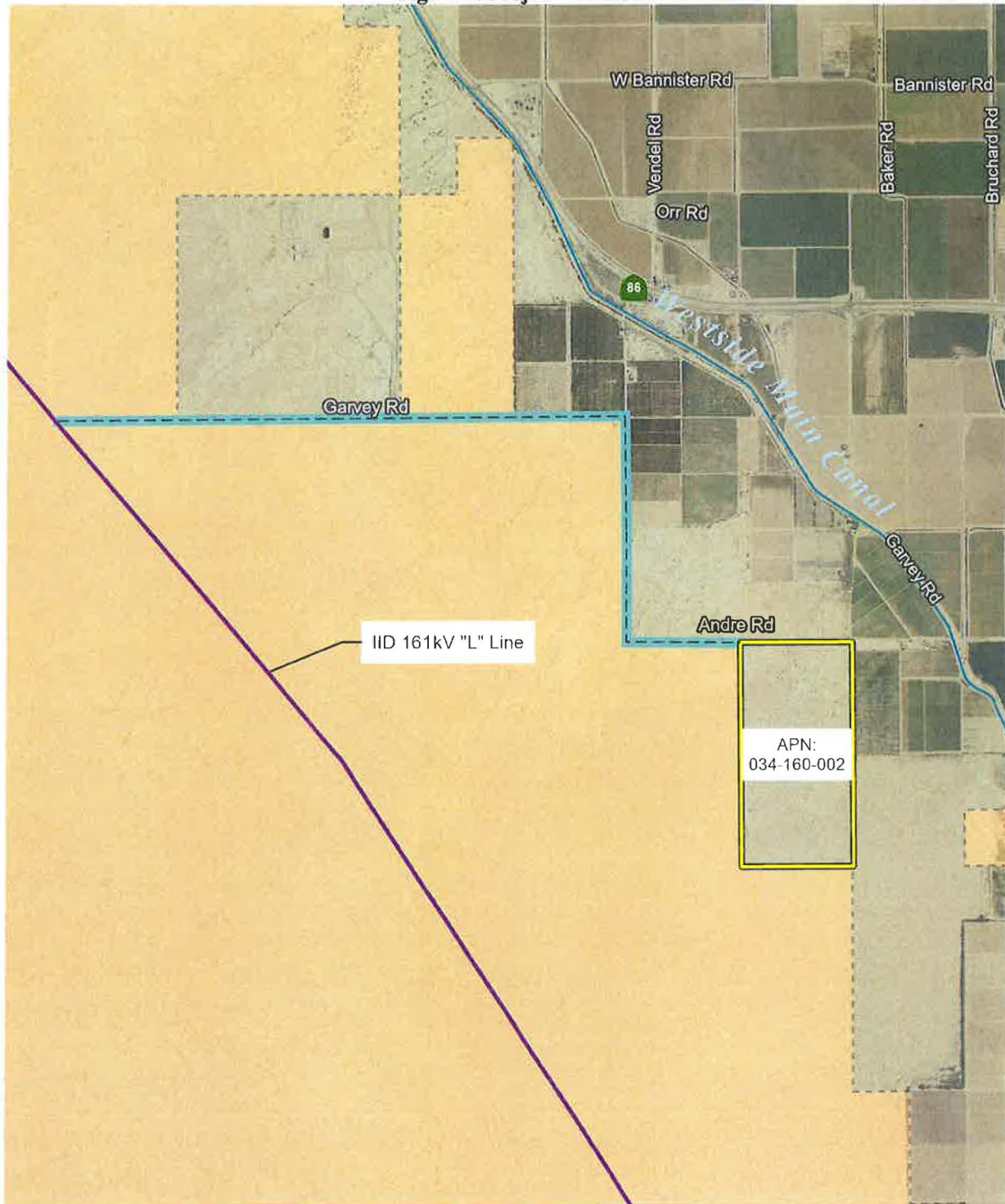
As previously mentioned above, the proposed gen-tie line would be located entirely on BLM land. The project applicant has filed a right-of-way (ROW) grant application with the BLM for a permit to construct, operate, and maintain the gen-tie line. The proposed ROW would be 60-feet-wide. Construction of the gen-tie line would result in approximately 24.5 acres of disturbed area.






Project Applicant: Apex Energy Solutions, LLC.

Date	07/01/2022	Signature	
		Title	Assistant Director
		Telephone	442-265-1736

Reference: California Administrative Code, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Section 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Figure 1. Project Location



-  Project Site - Solar Energy Facility
-  BLM Land
-  IID 161 kV "L" Line (Existing IID Line)
-  Gen-Tie (Proposed Project Gen-Tie)
-  60 ft Right of Way Required in BLM land (TYP)



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NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF DRAFT EIR FOR VEGA SES 6 SOLAR AND BATTERY STORAGE PROJECT AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC EIR SCOPING MEETING

The Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project as described below. Additionally, a public scoping meeting for the proposed EIR will be by the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department on July 28, 2022 at 6:00 P.M. This scoping meeting will be at the Planning & Development Services building located at 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243. Public comments regarding the scope of the EIR are welcomed at this meeting.

SUBJECT: VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project EIR
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CONSIDERATION: To Be Determined.

PROJECT LOCATION: The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel No. [APN] 034-160-002) in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA. The site is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern-most edge of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of the City of Brawley; and approximately 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland. The solar energy facility site is located directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile west of the Westside Main Canal. The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped, Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

The proposed project includes an approximately 4-mile electrical generator intertie (gen-tie) transmission line that would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) existing 161 kilovolt (kV) "L" Line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area. The gen-tie route begins at the northwest corner of the solar facility site, heads west approximately 0.5 miles on BLM land, then north for approximately 1 mile, and then west for 2.5 miles along Garvey Road where it would connect to IID's 161 kV "L" Line.

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The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy (RE) Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects with an approved conditional use permit (CUP). CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. The entire project site (APN 034-160-002) is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

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PROJECT APPLICANT: Apex Energy Solutions, LLC

URBAN AREA PLAN: None, located in unincorporated area of County of Imperial

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT: District 3, Supervisor Michael W. Kelley

ANTICIPATED SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS: The EIR will analyze potential impacts associated with the following: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology/Soils; Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology/Water Quality; Land Use/Planning; Noise and Vibration; Public Services; Transportation/Circulation; Tribal Cultural Resources; Utilities and Service Systems including water supply; Cumulative Impacts; and, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

COMMENTS REQUESTED: The Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department would like to know your ideas about the potential effects this project might have on the environment and your suggestions as to mitigation or ways the project may be revised to reduce or avoid any potentially significant environmental impacts. Your comments will guide the scope and content of potential environmental issues to be examined in the EIR. Your comments may be submitted in writing to David Black, Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243. Available project information may be reviewed at this location.

Initial Study



Initial Study and NOP

VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project

Initial Study #22-0007
General Plan Amendment #22-0001
Zone Change #22-0001
CUP #22-0005

Imperial County, CA

July 2022

Reviewed by:

County of Imperial
Planning & Development
Services Department
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

Prepared by:

HDR Engineering, Inc.
591 Camino de la Reina,
Suite 300
San Diego, CA 92108

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Introduction

A. Purpose

This document is a policy-level; project-level Initial Study for evaluation of potential environmental impacts resulting with the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project.

B. CEQA Requirements and the Imperial County's Rules and Regulations for Implementing CEQA

As defined by Section 15063 of the State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and Section 7 of the County's Rules and Regulations for Implementing CEQA, an **Initial Study** is prepared primarily to provide the Lead Agency with information to use as the basis for determining whether an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Negative Declaration, or Mitigated Negative Declaration would be appropriate for providing the necessary environmental documentation and clearance for any proposed project.

- According to Section 15065, an **EIR** is deemed appropriate for a particular proposal if the following conditions occur:
 - The proposal has the potential to substantially degrade quality of the environment.
 - The proposal has the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
 - The proposal has possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable.
 - The proposal could cause direct or indirect adverse effects on human beings.
- According to Section 15070(a), a **Negative Declaration** is deemed appropriate if the proposal would not result in any significant effect on the environment.
- According to Section 15070(b), a **Mitigated Negative Declaration** is deemed appropriate if it is determined that though a proposal could result in a significant effect, mitigation measures are available to reduce these significant effects to insignificant levels.

This Initial Study has determined that the proposed applications will result in potentially significant environmental impacts and therefore, an Environmental Impact Report is deemed as the appropriate document to provide necessary environmental evaluations and clearance for the proposed project.

This Initial Study and Notice of Preparation are prepared in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et. seq.); the State CEQA Guidelines & County of Imperial's CEQA Regulations, Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA; applicable requirements of the County of Imperial; and the regulations, requirements, and procedures of any other responsible public agency or an agency with jurisdiction by law.

Pursuant to the County of Imperial's CEQA Regulations, Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, depending on the project scope, the County of Imperial Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and/or Planning Director is designated the Lead Agency, in accordance with Section 15050 of the

CEQA Guidelines. The Lead Agency is the public agency which has the principal responsibility for approving the necessary environmental clearances and analyses for any project in the County.

C. Intended Uses of Initial Study and Notice of Preparation

This Initial Study and Notice of Preparation are informational documents which are intended to inform County of Imperial decision makers, other responsible or interested agencies, and the general public of potential environmental effects of the proposed applications. The environmental review process has been established to enable public agencies to evaluate environmental consequences and to examine and implement methods of eliminating or reducing any potentially adverse impacts. While CEQA requires that consideration be given to avoiding environmental damage, the Lead Agency and other responsible public agencies must balance adverse environmental effects against other public objectives, including economic and social goals.

The Initial Study and Notice of Preparation, prepared for the project will be circulated for a period of no less than 35 days for public and agency review and comments.

D. Contents of Initial Study and Notice of Preparation

This Initial Study is organized to facilitate a basic understanding of the existing setting and environmental implications of the proposed applications.

SECTION 1

I. INTRODUCTION presents an introduction to the entire report. This section discusses the environmental process, scope of environmental review, and incorporation by reference documents.

SECTION 2

II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM contains the County's Environmental Checklist Form. The checklist form presents results of the environmental evaluation for the proposed applications and those issue areas that would have either a significant impact, potentially significant impact, or no impact.

PROJECT SUMMARY, LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTINGS describes the proposed project entitlements and required applications. A description of discretionary approvals and permits required for project implementation is also included. It also identifies the location of the project and a general description of the surrounding environmental settings.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS evaluates each response provided in the environmental checklist form. Each response checked in the checklist form is discussed and supported with sufficient data and analysis as necessary. As appropriate, each response discussion describes and identifies specific impacts anticipated with project implementation.

SECTION 3

III. MANDATORY FINDINGS presents Mandatory Findings of Significance in accordance with Section 15065 of the CEQA Guidelines.

E. Scope of Environmental Analysis

For evaluation of environmental impacts, each question from the Environmental Checklist Form is summarized and responses are provided according to the analysis undertaken as part of the Initial

Study. Impacts and effects will be evaluated and quantified, when appropriate. To each question, there are four possible responses, including:

1. No Impact: A “No Impact” response is adequately supported if the impact simply does not apply to the proposed applications.
2. Less Than Significant Impact: The proposed applications will have the potential to impact the environment. These impacts, however, will be less than significant; no additional analysis is required.
3. Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated: This applies where incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.”
4. Potentially Significant Impact: The proposed applications could have impacts that are considered significant. Additional analyses and possibly an EIR could be required to identify mitigation measures that could reduce these impacts to less than significant levels.

F. Policy-Level or Project-Level Environmental Analysis

This Initial Study will be conducted under a policy-level, project-level analysis.

Regarding mitigation measures, it is not the intent of this document to “overlap” or restate conditions of approval that are commonly established for future known projects or the proposed applications. Additionally, those other standard requirements and regulations that any development must comply with, that are outside the County’s jurisdiction, are also not considered mitigation measures, and therefore, will not be identified in this document.

G. Tiered Documents and Incorporation by Reference

Information, findings, and conclusions contained in this document are based on incorporation by reference of tiered documentation, which are discussed in the following section.

1. Tiered Documents

As permitted in Section 15152(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, information and discussions from other documents can be included into this document. Tiering is defined as follows:

“Tiering refers to using the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR (such as the one prepared for a general plan or policy statement) with later EIRs and negative declarations on narrower projects; incorporating by reference the general discussions from the broader EIR; and concentrating the later EIR or negative declaration solely on the issues specific to the later project.”

Tiering also allows this document to comply with Section 15152(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, which discourages redundant analyses, as follows:

“Agencies are encouraged to tier the environmental analyses which they prepare for separate but related projects including the general plans, zoning changes, and development projects. This approach can eliminate repetitive discussion of the same issues and focus the later EIR or negative declaration on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review. Tiering is appropriate when the sequence of analysis is from an EIR prepared for a

general plan, policy or program to an EIR or negative declaration for another plan, policy, or program of lesser scope, or to a site-specific EIR or negative declaration.”

Further, Section 15152(d) of the CEQA Guidelines states:

“Where an EIR has been prepared and certified for a program, plan, policy, or ordinance consistent with the requirements of this section, any lead agency for a later project pursuant to or consistent with the program, plan, policy, or ordinance should limit the EIR or negative declaration on the later project to effects which:

- (1) Were not examined as significant effects on the environment in the prior EIR; or
- (2) Are susceptible to substantial reduction or avoidance by the choice of specific revisions in the project, by the imposition of conditions, or other means.”

2. Incorporation by Reference

Incorporation by reference is a procedure for reducing the size of EIRs/MND and is most appropriate for including long, descriptive, or technical materials that provide general background information, but do not contribute directly to the specific analysis of the project itself. This procedure is particularly useful when an EIR or Negative Declaration relies on a broadly-drafted EIR for its evaluation of cumulative impacts of related projects (*Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation v. County of Los Angeles* [1986, 177 Ca.3d 300]). If an EIR or Negative Declaration relies on information from a supporting study that is available to the public, the EIR or Negative Declaration cannot be deemed unsupported by evidence or analysis (*San Francisco Ecology Center v. City and County of San Francisco* [1975, 48 Ca.3d 584, 595]).

When an EIR or Negative Declaration incorporates a document by reference, the incorporation must comply with Section 15150 of the CEQA Guidelines as follows:

- The incorporated document must be available to the public or be a matter of public record (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150[a]). The General Plan EIR is available, along with this document, at the County of Imperial Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 Ph. (442) 265-1736.
- This document must be available for inspection by the public at an office of the lead agency (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150[b]). These documents are available at the County of Imperial Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243, Ph. (442) 265-1736.
- These documents must summarize the portion of the document being incorporated by reference or briefly describe information that cannot be summarized. Furthermore, these documents must describe the relationship between the incorporated information and the analysis in the tiered documents (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150[c]). As discussed above, the tiered EIRs address the entire project site and provide background and inventory information and data which apply to the project site. Incorporated information and/or data will be cited in the appropriate sections.
- These documents must include the State identification number of the incorporated documents (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150[d]). The State Clearinghouse Number for the ‘County of Imperial General Plan EIR is SCH #93011023.



The material to be incorporated in this document will include general background information (CEQA Guidelines Section 15150[f]).

Environmental Checklist Form

1. **Project Title:** VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project
2. **Lead Agency name and address:** Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243
3. **Contact person and phone number:** David Black, Planner IV, 442-265-1746
4. **Project location:** The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel No. [APN] 034-160-002) in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA. The site is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern-most edge of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of the City of Brawley; and approximately 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland. The project site is located directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile west of the Westside Main Canal. The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

The proposed project includes an approximately 4-mile electrical generator intertie (gen-tie) transmission line that would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) existing 161 kilovolt (kV) "L" Line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area. The gen-tie route begins at the northwest corner of the solar facility site, heads west approximately 0.5 miles on BLM land, then north for approximately 1 mile, and then west for 2.5 miles along Garvey Road where it would connect to IID's 161 kV "L" Line.
5. **Project sponsor's name and address:** Apex Energy Solutions, LLC, 604 Sutter Street, Suite 250, Folsom, CA 95630
6. **General Plan Designation:** Agriculture
7. **Zoning:** S-2 (Open Space/Preservation)
8. **Description of project:** The project applicant, Apex Energy Solutions, LLC, proposes to construct and operate an 80 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar facility with an integrated 160 MW battery storage system on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned land. The proposed project would be comprised of solar PV arrays panels, an on-site substation, BESS, generation tie-line (gen-tie), inverters, transformers, underground electrical cables, and access roads.
9. **Surrounding land uses and setting: Briefly describe the project's surroundings:** The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/BLM land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.
10. **Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement.):**
 - Department of Public Works – Ministerial permits (building, grading, encroachment)
 - Imperial County Air Pollution Control District – Fugitive dust control plan, Authority to construct

- California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Notice of Intent for General Construction Permit
- Imperial Irrigation District – Water supply agreement/permit for water use lease agreement
- Bureau of Land Management – Right-of-way grant for the off-site gen-tie line to be located on federal lands under the jurisdiction of the BLM

11. Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?

Yes, California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area were sent an AB 52/SB 18 consultation request letter on July 1, 2022.

Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forestry Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Geology/Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land Use/Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise | <input type="checkbox"/> Population/Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Utilities/Service Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance |

Environmental Evaluation Committee Determination

After Review of the Initial Study, the Environmental Evaluation Committee (EEC) has:

- Found that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- Found that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- Found that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- Found that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- Found that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DE MINIMIS IMPACT FINDING:

Yes No

EEC VOTES

	YES	NO	ABSENT
PUBLIC WORKS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OFFICE EMERGENCY SERVICES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
APCD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SHERIFF DEPARTMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ICPDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Jim Minnick, Director of Planning/EEC Chairman

Signature

Date:

Project Summary

Project Location

The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel No. [APN] 034-160-002) in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA. The site is located approximately 6 miles south of the southern-most edge of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of the City of Brawley; and approximately 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland (Figure 1). The project site is located directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile west of the Westside Main Canal (Figure 2). The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

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Environmental Setting

The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The Westside Main Canal travels southeast to northwest and is located northeast and east of the solar energy facility site.

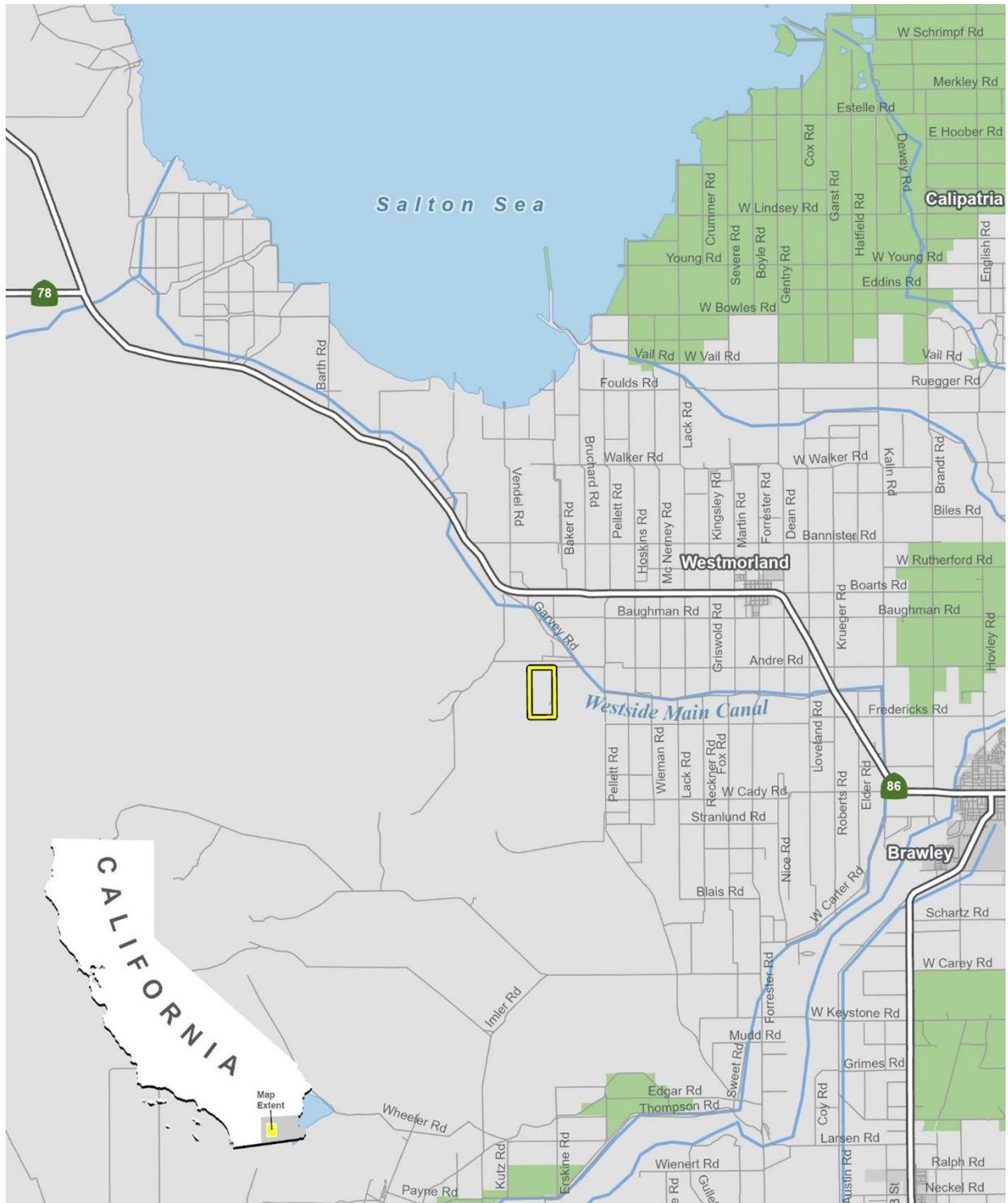
General Plan Consistency

The proposed project is located within an unincorporated area of the County. The existing General Plan land use designation is Agriculture. The project site is currently zoned Open Space/Preservation (S-2). Construction of a solar facility would be allowed within the existing zoning under a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy (RE) Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects, with an approved CUP. CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy project not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. The entire project site (APN 034-160-002) is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone. Therefore, the proposed

project requires a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to include/classify the project parcel into the RE Overlay Zone. No change in the underlying General Plan land use (Agriculture) is proposed.

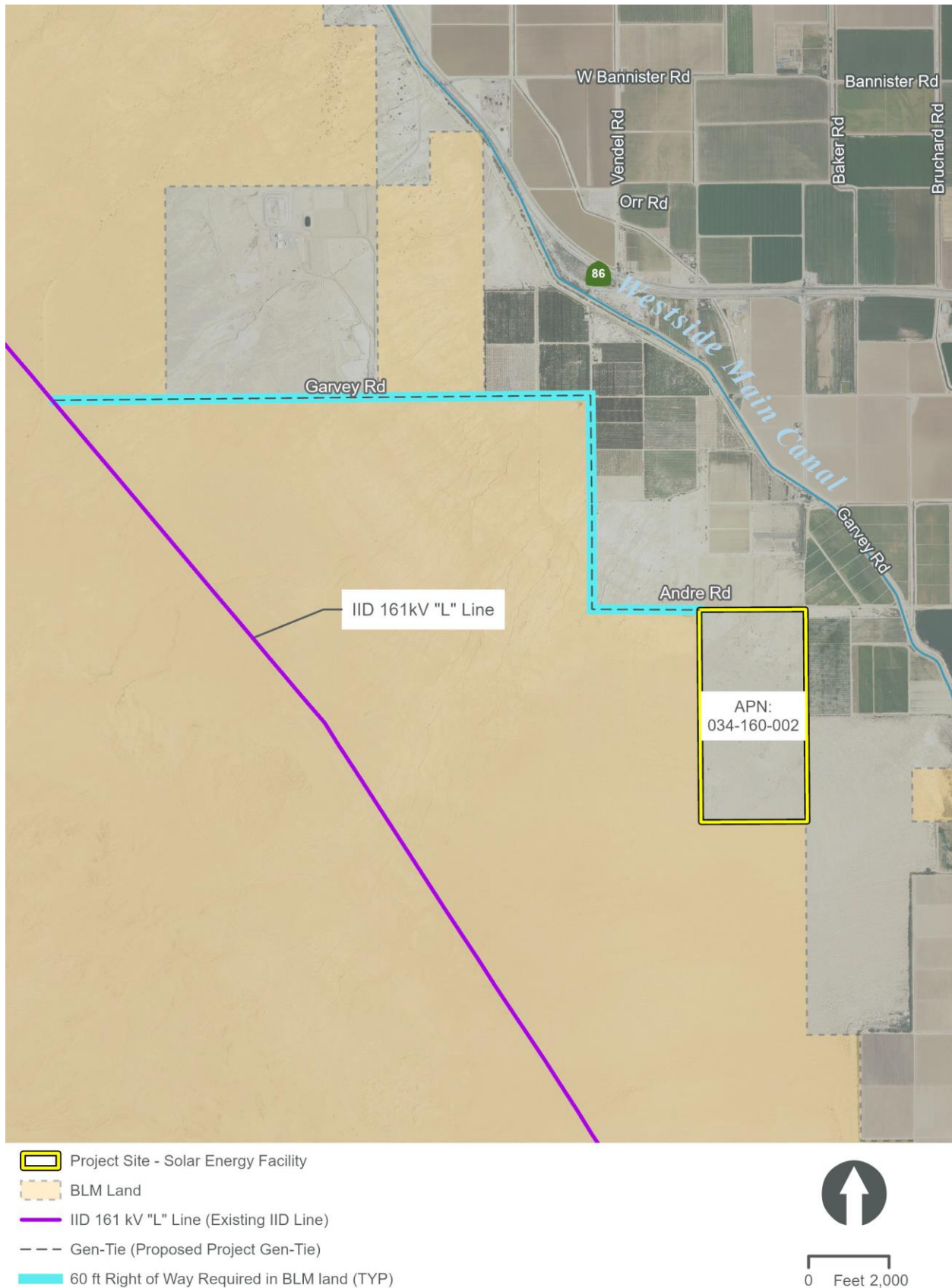
Figure 1. Regional Location



- Project Site - Solar Energy Facility
- Renewable Energy Overlay Zone



Figure 2. Project Site



Evaluation of Environmental Impacts

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors, as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from "Earlier Analyses," as described in (5) below, may be cross-referenced).
5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a. Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b. Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c. Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used, or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
9. The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a. The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
 - b. The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.



I. Aesthetics

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:</i>				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** According to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Imperial County General Plan, the solar energy facility site is not located within an area that has been formally identified as a federal, state, or county scenic vista (County of Imperial 2016). No scenic vistas or areas with high visual quality would be disrupted. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.
- b) **No Impact.** According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Scenic Highway Mapping System (Caltrans 2019), the project site is not located within a state scenic highway corridor, nor are there any state scenic highways located in proximity to the project site. The nearest scenic highway to the project site is the junction of SR-78 and SR-86, located over 10 miles northwest of the site. The proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Although the project site is not located near a scenic highway or designated scenic vista, the proposed project may result in a change to the look and rural character of the surrounding area. Therefore, a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. A visualization study will be prepared for the project and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.

- d) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Minimal lighting is required for project operation and is limited to safety and security functions. All lighting will be directed downwards and/or away from any public right-of-way; however, there are no heavily traveled public roadways in immediate proximity to the project site.

The solar panels will be constructed of low reflective materials; therefore, it is not anticipated that they would result in creating glare. Additionally, the proposed project is located in a rural undeveloped area of Imperial County. There are no established residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the project site. However, minimal lighting would be required for operations and would be limited to safety and security functions. Although the proposed project is not expected to create a substantial new source of light or glare affecting day or nighttime views, a glare study will be prepared for the proposed project and this issue will be addressed in the EIR. Therefore, a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area.

The Brawley Municipal Airport is located approximately 10 miles southeast of the project site. Although the solar panels will be constructed of low reflective materials, the potential for glare to impact aircraft will be analyzed further in the EIR.



II. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<p><i>In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:</i></p>				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** According to the farmland maps prepared by the California Department of Conservation (DOC) (DOC 2021), no portion of the solar energy facility site is designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The proposed gen-tie line would border land designated as Farmland of Local Importance; however, the gen-tie line would be located entirely on undeveloped BLM desert land. Therefore,

implementation of the proposed project would not convert Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland to non-agricultural use.

- b) **No Impact.** The solar energy facility site is currently zoned Open Space/Preservation (S-2). According to the 2016/2017 Imperial County Williamson Act Map produced by the California Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection (DOC 2016), the project site is not located on Williamson Act contracted land. The proposed project would not conflict with existing zoning for agriculture use or a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, no impact would occur.
- c) **No Impact.** There are no existing forest lands, timberlands, or timberland zoned "Timberland Production" within or immediately adjacent to the project site that would conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.
- d) **No Impact.** There are no existing forest lands within or immediately adjacent to the project site. The proposed project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.
- e) **No Impact.** As discussed in Response II. a) above, the project site does not contain any lands mapped by the California Department of Conservation as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The project site is not used for agricultural production. Implementation of the proposed project would not convert any farmland to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.

III. Air Quality

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.</i>				
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The project site is located within the jurisdiction of Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) in the Imperial County portion of the Salton Sea Air Basin. Construction of the proposed project would create temporary emissions of dust, fumes, equipment exhaust, and other air contaminants that may conflict with the ICAPCD’s rules and regulations. No stationary source emissions are proposed from the proposed project; however, temporary construction emissions have the potential to result in a significant air quality impact. An air quality and greenhouse gas study will be prepared to analyze the proposed project’s consistency with air quality plans, and will be included in the EIR analysis.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Currently, the Salton Sea Air Basin is either in attainment or unclassified for all federal and state air pollutant standards, with the exception of the federal ozone (O₃), particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM₁₀) and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) standards, and state standards for O₃ and PM₁₀. Air pollutants transported into the Salton Sea Air Basin from the adjacent South Coast Air Basin (Los Angeles County, San Bernardino County, Orange County, and Riverside County) and Mexicali (Mexico) substantially contribute to the non-attainment conditions in the Salton Sea Air Basin. A potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. An air quality and greenhouse gas study will be prepared to analyze the proposed project’s potential air quality impacts and will be included in the EIR analysis.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/ BLM land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. The nearest sensitive receptor to the project site is a single-family residence located approximately 2,725 feet from the northeastern corner of the solar energy facility site. There are also single-family homes located approximately 1.53 miles east of the solar energy

facility site, located at the intersection of Andre Road and Hoskins Road. This issue will be addressed in the air quality and greenhouse gas study and EIR analysis.

- d) **No Impact.** Land uses commonly considered to be potential sources of odorous emissions include wastewater treatment plants, sanitary landfills, food processing facilities, chemical manufacturing plants, rendering plants, paint/coating operations, and concentrated agricultural feeding operations and dairies. The construction and operation of a solar facility, battery storage system, and gen-tie line are not odor producers. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.



IV. Biological Resources

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of wildlife nursery sites?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** According to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 2016), numerous special-status species occur in the County, and of particular concern is the western burrowing owl which may have the potential to occur near the project site due to suitable habitat. The disturbed areas, berms of the irrigation canals, and agricultural areas in the immediate vicinity provide potential habitat for

the western burrowing owl. Flat-tailed horned lizard has a high potential to occur on the solar energy facility site and gen-tie line due to suitable habitat. Thus, a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. A biological resources report and aquatic resources delineation report that will address the proposed project's potential impacts on biological resources will be prepared and included in the EIR analysis.

- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response IV. a) above.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The project site is adjacent to the Westside Main Canal and unlined irrigation drains which could potentially meet the definition of waters of the U.S. and regulated under the California Water Act, the Porter-Cologne Act, and California Fish and Game Code Section 1602. Therefore, a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. A jurisdictional waters/wetlands delineation report will be prepared and included in the EIR analysis.
- d) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response IV. a) above
- e) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response IV. a) above
- f) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area. A portion of the gen-tie transmission line falls within BLM Renewable Energy Development Focus Areas of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. However, none of the project area falls within Areas of Environmental Concern. If habitat within the California Desert National Conserved Lands area of the project is impacted, a potentially significant impact may occur. Therefore, a biological technical report will be prepared, and this potential impact will be evaluated in the EIR analysis.



V. Cultural Resources

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The solar energy facility site is bound by undeveloped Open Space/ BLM land to the west and south, and active agricultural land to the north and east. Although the proposed project is not expected to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource or archaeological resource, a potentially significant impact could occur if an unanticipated cultural resource is discovered. A cultural resources report that will address the proposed project’s potential impacts on historic and prehistoric resources will be prepared and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response V. a) above.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Although unlikely, there is a potential for unknown human remains to be unearthed during earthwork activities. This issue is potentially significant and will be addressed in the EIR.

VI. Energy

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** Information contained in this section is summarized from the *Energy Impact Analysis* prepared for the project (ECORP Consulting, Inc. 2021). The proposed project would impact energy resources during construction and operation. Energy resources that would be potentially impacted include electricity, and petroleum-based fuel supplies and distribution systems. The proposed project would not utilize any natural gas during either construction or operation of the proposed project, and no further analysis of natural gas is provided in this analysis.

The following discussion calculates the potential energy consumption associated with the construction and operation of the proposed project and analyzes if any energy utilized by the proposed project is wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources.

Construction Energy

Construction activities would primarily involve demolition and grubbing; grading of the project area; trenching; the installation of solar equipment and security fencing; and the offsite infrastructure work required for the IID gen-tie transmission line route.

Construction-Related Electricity

During construction of the proposed project, electricity would be consumed to construct the new structures and infrastructure. Electricity would be supplied to the project site by IID and would be obtained from the existing electrical lines in the vicinity of the project site. The use of electricity from existing power lines rather than temporary diesel or gasoline powered generators would minimize impacts on energy use. Electricity consumed during project construction would vary throughout the construction period based on the construction activities being performed. Various construction activities include electricity associated with the conveyance of water that would be used during project construction for dust control (supply and conveyance) and electricity to power any necessary lighting during construction, electronic equipment, or other construction activities necessitating electrical power. Such electricity demand would be temporary, nominal, and would cease upon the completion of construction. Overall, construction activities associated with the proposed project would require limited electricity consumption that would not be expected to have an adverse impact on available electricity supplies and infrastructure. Therefore, the use of electricity during project construction would not be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary.

Construction-Related Petroleum Fuel Use

Petroleum-based fuel usage represents the highest amount of transportation energy potentially consumed during construction, which would be utilized by both off-road equipment operating on the project site and on-road automobiles transporting workers to and from the project site and on-road trucks transporting equipment and supplies to the project site.

The proposed project's gasoline fuel consumption during the one-time construction period is estimated to be 119,015 gallons during 2022 construction and 28,966 gallons during 2023 construction for the combination of the solar/battery storage facilities and gen-tie line (ECORP Consulting, Inc. 2021). The proposed project's gasoline consumption would increase the annual countywide gasoline fuel use in the county by less than 0.1 percent. As such, the construction-related petroleum use would be nominal, when compared to current county-wide petroleum usage rates. No unusual project characteristics would necessitate the use of construction equipment that would be less energy efficient than at comparable construction sites in the region or the state. Construction contractors would purchase their own gasoline and diesel fuel from local suppliers and would judiciously use fuel supplies to minimize costs due to waste and subsequently maximize profits. Additionally, construction equipment fleet turnover and increasingly stringent state and federal regulations on engine efficiency combined with state regulations limiting engine idling times and requiring recycling of construction debris, would further reduce the amount of transportation fuel demand during project construction. For these reasons, it is expected that construction fuel consumption associated with the project would not be any more inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary than other similar development projects of this nature.

Construction activities associated with the proposed project would be required to adhere to all State and ICAPCD regulations for off-road equipment and on-road trucks, which provide minimum fuel efficiency standards. As such, construction activities for the proposed project would not result in the wasteful, inefficient, and unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Impacts regarding transportation energy would be less than significant.

Operational Energy

Operations of the proposed project would not result in the consumption of electricity or natural gas and thus, would not contribute to the County-wide usage and would directly support the Renewable Portfolio Standards goal of increasing the percentage of electricity procured from renewable sources (ECORP Consulting, Inc. 2021).

Operations-Related Electricity

Operation of the proposed project would result in the production of electricity at the project site. The proposed project would generate a maximum of 80 MW of electricity at any one time and would potentially displace approximately 34,614 metric tons of CO₂e per year and approximately 1,038,461 metric tons of CO₂e over the course of 30 years (ECORP Consulting, Inc. 2021). Therefore, the contribution of renewable energy production would result in a net cumulative reduction of GHG emissions, a key environmental benefit. As such, the operations-related electricity use would provide a significant renewable resource for the IID and would help IID achieve the State's Renewable Portfolio Standards requirement for non-carbon sources of electricity. No impact would occur from electricity-related energy consumption from the proposed project.

Operations-Related Petroleum Fuel Usage

Operation of the proposed project would result in increased consumption of petroleum-based fuels related to automotive fuel necessary for ongoing maintenance activities. The proposed project would consume 121 gallons of petroleum fuel per year from vehicle travel. This equates to a 0.00006 percent increase of the gasoline and diesel consumed in Imperial

County annually. As such, the operations-related petroleum use would be nominal, when compared to current petroleum usage rates.

It should be noted that, the proposed project would comply with all Federal, State, and County requirements related to the consumption of transportation energy and would provide a non-carbon source of electricity to power electric vehicles in Imperial County. Thus, impacts with regard transportation energy supply and infrastructure capacity would be less than significant and no mitigation measures would be required.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would help California meet its Renewable Portfolio Standard of 60 percent of retail electricity sales from renewable sources by the end of 2030 and 100 percent by 2045. The electricity generation process associated with the project would utilize solar technology to convert sunlight directly into electricity. Solar PV technology is consistent with the definition of an “eligible renewable energy resource” in Section 399.12 of the California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) and the definition of “in-state renewable electricity generation facility” in Section 25741 of the CPUC. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy of energy efficiency. This is considered a less than significant impact.



VII. Geology and Soils

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury or death involving:				
i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risk to life or property?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- ai) **No Impact.** According to the California Earthquake Hazards Zone Application (California DOC 2022), the project site is not located within a State of California, Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone. The nearest Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone is the Superstition Hills fault located approximately 4.5 miles southwest of the project site. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.
- a ii) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The project site is located in the seismically-active Imperial Valley in Southern California and considered likely to be subjected to moderate to strong ground motion from earthquakes in the region. The project site could be affected by the occurrence of seismic activity to some degree but no more than the surrounding properties. A potentially significant impact has been identified for this issue area. A geotechnical report that will address the proposed project's potential impacts on geology and soils will be prepared and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.
- a iii) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Liquefaction occurs when granular soil below the water table is subjected to vibratory motions, such as vibratory motion produced by earthquakes. With strong ground shaking, an increase in pore water pressure develops as the soil tends to reduce in volume. If the increase in pore water pressure is sufficient to reduce the vertical effective stress (suspending the soil particles in water), the soil strength decreases, and the soil behaves as a liquid (similar to quicksand). Liquefaction can produce excessive settlement, ground rupture, lateral spreading, or failure of shallow bearing foundations.

Four conditions are generally required for liquefaction to occur:

- 1) The soil must be saturated (relatively shallow groundwater).
- 2) The soil must be loosely packed (low to medium relative density).
- 3) The soil must be relatively cohesionless (not clayey).
- 4) Groundshaking of sufficient intensity must occur to function as a trigger mechanism.

All these conditions may exist to some degree at the project site. Therefore, there is a potentially significant impact associated with liquefaction. A geotechnical report that will address the proposed project's potential impacts on geology and soils will be prepared and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.

- a iv) **No Impact.** According to *Figure 2: Landslide Activity* in the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the project site is not located in an area that is prone to landslide hazards. Furthermore, the project site and surrounding area is relatively flat. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.
- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** According to *Figure 3: Erosion Activity* in the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the project site is within a generally flat area with low levels of natural erosion. However, soil erosion can result during construction as grading and construction can loosen surface soils and make soils susceptible to wind and water movement across the surface. Impacts are not considered significant because erosion would be controlled on-site in accordance with Imperial County standards including preparation, review, and approval of a grading plan by the Imperial County Engineer. Implementation of Imperial County standards would reduce the potential impacts to a less than significant level.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Near surface soils within the project site will need to be identified to determine if the soils are unstable. Therefore, this issue is potentially significant and will be analyzed in the EIR.
- d) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Near surface soils within the project site will need to be identified to determine if they consist of soils having expansion potential. Therefore, this issue is potentially significant and will be analyzed in the EIR.
- e) **No Impact.** The proposed project would not require the installation of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. The proposed solar facility would be remotely

operated, controlled and monitored and with no requirement for daily on-site employees. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.

- f) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Many paleontological fossil sites are recorded in Imperial County and have been discovered during construction activities. Paleontological resources are typically impacted when earthwork activities, such as mass excavation cut into geological deposits (formations) with buried fossils. It is not known if any paleontological resources are located on the project site. The proposed project's potential to impact paleontological resources will be addressed in the EIR.

VIII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** In the long-term, the proposed project is expected to provide a benefit with respect to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. However, the proposed project has the potential to generate greenhouse gas emissions during construction, in addition to construction worker trips to and from the project site. Thus, a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. An air quality and greenhouse gas study will be prepared for the proposed project, and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response VIII. a) above.



IX. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the likely release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** Construction of the proposed project will involve the limited use of hazardous materials, such as fuels and greases to fuel and service construction equipment. No extremely hazardous substances are anticipated to be produced, used, stored, transported, or disposed of as a result of project construction. Operation of the proposed project would be conducted remotely. Therefore, no habitable structures (e.g. housing) are proposed on the project site.

Regular and routine maintenance of the proposed project may result in the potential to handle hazardous materials. However, the hazardous materials handled on-site would be limited to small amounts of everyday use cleaners and common chemicals used for maintenance. The applicant will be required to comply with State laws and County Ordinance restrictions, which regulate and control hazardous materials handled on-site. Such hazardous wastes would be transported off-site for disposal according to applicable State and County restrictions and laws governing the disposal of hazardous waste during construction and operation of the project. Therefore, this is considered a less than significant impact.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Refer to response IX. a) above.
- c) **No Impact.** The project site is not located within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school. No impact is identified for this issue area.
- d) **No Impact.** Based on a review of the Cortese List conducted in May 2022, the project site is not listed as a hazardous materials site (Department of Toxic Substances Control 2022). No impact is identified for this issue area.
- e) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The project site is not located within 2 miles of a public airport. The nearest public airport is the Brawley Municipal Airport located approximately 9.8 miles southeast of the project site. The project site is outside of the airport compatibility zones of the Brawley Municipal Airport (County of Imperial 1996). Although the solar panels will be constructed of low reflective materials, the potential for glare to impact aircraft will be analyzed further in the EIR.
- f) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project is not expected to impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. The project applicant will be required, through the conditions of approval, to prepare a street improvement plan for the project that will include emergency access points and safe vehicular travel. In addition, local building codes would be followed to minimize flood, seismic, and fire hazard. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact associated with the possible impediment to emergency plans.
- g) **Less than Significant Impact.** The solar energy facility site is located in the unincorporated area of Imperial County. According to the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the potential for a major fire in the unincorporated areas of the County is generally low.

Proposed project facilities would be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable fire protection and other environmental, health, and safety requirements (e.g., CPUC safety standards). Primary access to the project site would be located off SR-78 from the north and west, and across the IID aqueduct, via county roadways (Garvey Road and Andre Road). Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Additionally, water for emergency fire suppression would likely be obtained from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. Water would be picked up from a nearby lateral canal and delivered to the construction location by a water truck that would be capable of carrying approximately 4,000 gallons per load. Based on these considerations, a less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.



X. Hydrology and Water Quality

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i. result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv. impede or redirect flood flows?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The proposed project has the potential to create urban non-point source discharge (e.g., synthetic/organic chemicals). As runoff flows over developed surfaces, water can entrain a variety of potential pollutants including, but not limited to, oil

and grease, pesticides, trace metals, and nutrients. These pollutants can become suspended in runoff and carried to receiving waters. If they are not intercepted or are left uncontrolled, the polluted runoff would otherwise freely sheet flow from the project site to the IID Imperial Valley drains and could result in the accumulation of these pollutants in the receiving waters. Potentially significant water quality impacts have been identified and will be addressed in the EIR.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** During construction, potable water would be brought to the site for drinking and domestic needs. The approximate 550 acre-feet (AF) of water required during construction would be obtained from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. This water would be used for earthwork, soil conditioning, dust suppression, and compaction efforts. Because the solar panels will be pole-mounted above ground, they are not considered “hardscape”, such as roads, building foundations, or parking areas, as they do not require a substantial amount of impervious material. Estimated annual water consumption for operation and maintenance of the proposed project, including periodic PV module washing, would be approximately 20-AF annually, which would be trucked to the project site as needed. Therefore, the panels and their mounting foundation would not impede groundwater recharge. A less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.
- ci) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site. It is anticipated that the proposed drainage patterns would be similar to the existing site conditions. The project applicant would be required to implement on-site erosion control measures in accordance with Imperial County standards which require preparation, review, and approval of a grading plan by the Imperial County Engineer. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site. A less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.
- cii) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project is not anticipated to generate a significant increase in the amount of runoff water from water use involving solar panel washing. Water will continue to percolate through the ground, as a majority of the surface on the project site will remain pervious. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially increase the rate of runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site or exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems and provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. A less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.
- ciii) **Less than Significant Impact.** Refer to response X. cii) above.
- civ) **Potentially Significant Impact.** According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (Panel 06025C1000C) (FEMA 2008), the solar energy facility site is entirely within Zone X, which is an area determined to be outside of the 0.2 percent annual chance of a flood. A portion of the gen-tie line that runs in the east-west direction of Garvey Road would be within Zone A, which are areas subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual chance flood event. Therefore, the proposed project has the potential to impede or redirect flood flows and this is considered a potentially significant impact.
- d) **Potentially Significant Impact.** As previously mentioned, a portion of the gen-tie line would be within Zone A, which are areas subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual chance flood event. The proposed project has the potential to create urban non-point source discharge (e.g., synthetic/organic chemicals). As runoff flows over developed surfaces, water can entrain a variety of potential pollutants including, but not limited to, oil and grease, pesticides, trace metals, and nutrients. These pollutants can become suspended in runoff and carried to receiving waters. If they are not intercepted or are left uncontrolled, the polluted runoff would otherwise freely sheet flow from the project site to the IID Imperial Valley drains and could result in the accumulation of these pollutants in the receiving waters. The proposed project has the potential to release pollutants due to inundation by flood.

The project site is not located near any large bodies of water. The Salton Sea is located approximately 6 miles north of the project site. Furthermore, the relatively flat project site is approximately 100 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, the proposed project would not risk release of pollutants due to inundation by tsunami or seiche.

- e) **No Impact.** The proposed project will not involve the use of groundwater nor require dewatering activities. The approximate 550 AF of water required during construction would be obtained from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. This water would be used for earthwork, soil conditioning, dust suppression, and compaction efforts. Therefore, the proposed project will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. No impact is identified for this issue area.

XI. Land Use and Planning

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** The proposed project is located in a sparsely populated portion of unincorporated Imperial County. There are no established residential communities located within or in the vicinity of the project site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not divide an established community. No impact is identified for this issue area.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The solar energy facility site is currently zoned as Open Space/Preservation (S-2). Pursuant to Title 9, Division 5, Chapter 19 (County of Imperial 2019a), the following uses are permitted in the S-2 zone subject to approval of a CUP from Imperial County:

d) Communication Towers: including radio, television, cellular, digital, along with the necessary support equipment such as receivers, transmitters, antennas, satellite dishes, relays, etc.

i) Major facilities relating to the generation and transmission of electrical energy provide[d] such facilities are not under State or Federal law, to [be] approved exclusively by an agency, or agencies of the State or Federal government, and provided such facilities shall be approved subsequent to coordination review of the Imperial Irrigation District for electrical matters. Such uses shall include but be limited to the following:

- *Electrical generation plants*
- *Facilities for the transmission of electrical energy (100-200 kV)*
- *Electrical substations in an electrical transmission system (500 kv/230 kv/161 kV)*

The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy (RE) Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects, with an approved CUP. CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. The solar energy facility site (APN 034-160-002) is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

Implementation of the project requires an amendment to the County's General Plan Renewable Energy and Transmission Element, Zone Change, and approval of a CUP, as described below:

- **General Plan Amendment:** The applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment to include/classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone. No change in the underlying General Plan land use (Agriculture) is proposed.
- **Zone Change:** The project site is currently zoned Open Space/Preservation (S-2). The applicant is requesting a Zone Change to classify the project parcel (APN 034-160-002) into the RE Overlay Zone to allow for solar and battery storage development.
- **Conditional Use Permit:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of a CUP by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated battery storage system on land zoned S-2.
- **Water Supply Assessment:** Implementation of the project would require the approval of the Water Supply Assessment.

The proposed General Plan Amendment and Zone Change may result in a conflict with an applicable land use plan, policy or regulation. A potentially significant impact has been identified for this issue, and this issue will be addressed in the EIR.

Because the proposed gen-tie line would be located entirely on BLM land, the project applicant has filed a right-of-way (ROW) grant application with the BLM for a permit to construct, operate, and maintain the gen-tie line. The proposed ROW would be 60-foot-wide. Construction of the gen-tie line would result in approximately 24.5 acres of disturbed area.

XII. Mineral Resources

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** The project site is not used for mineral resource production. According to *Figure 8: Imperial County Existing Mineral Resources* of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 2016), no known mineral resources occur within the project site nor does the project site contain mapped mineral resources. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in the loss of availability of any known mineral resources that would be of value to the region and the residents of California nor would the proposed project result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource.
- b) **No Impact.** Refer to Response XIII. a) above.



XIII. Noise

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project result in:</i>				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** The Imperial County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2, Section 90702.00 - Sound level limits, establishes one-hour average sound level limits for the County’s land use zones. Agricultural/industrial operations are required to comply with the noise levels prescribed under the general industrial zones. Therefore, the project is required to maintain noise levels below 75 decibels (dB) (averaged over one hour) during any time of day. The project would be expected to comply with the Noise Element of the General Plan which states that construction noise, from a single piece of equipment or a combination of equipment, shall not exceed 75 dB, when averaged over an eight-hour period, and measured at the nearest sensitive receptor. Construction equipment operation is also limited to the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nevertheless, the project will result in the increase in ambient noise levels during construction. This issue will be addressed in the EIR.

- b) **Less than Significant Impact.** Groundborne vibration and groundborne noise could originate from earth movement during the construction phase of the proposed project. However, significant vibration is typically associated with activities such as blasting or the use of pile drivers, neither of which would be required during project construction. The project would be expected to comply with all applicable requirements for long-term operation, as well as with measures to reduce excessive groundborne vibration and noise to ensure that the project would not expose persons or structures to excessive groundborne vibration. Nevertheless, this issue will be addressed in the EIR.

- c) **No Impact.** The project site is not located within 2 miles of a public airport. The nearest airport is the Brawley Municipal Airport located approximately 9.8 miles southeast of the project site. The project site is outside of the airport compatibility zones of the Brawley Municipal Airport (County of Imperial 1996). Therefore, the proposed project would not expose people residing or working in the project area to excess noise levels and no impact is identified for this issue area.



XIV. Population and Housing

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Less than Significant Impact.** Development of housing is not proposed as part of the proposed project. No full-time employees are required to operate the proposed project since the project facility will be monitored remotely. However, it is anticipated that maintenance of the facility will require minimal site presence to perform periodic visual inspections and minor repairs. On intermittent occasions, the presence of additional workers may be required for repairs or replacement of equipment and panel cleaning; however, due to the nature of the facility, such actions will likely occur infrequently and would likely come from the existing local workforce. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a substantial growth in the area, as the number of employees required to operate and maintain the facility is minimal. A less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.
- b) **No Impact.** No housing exists within the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not displace any existing people or housing, which would require the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. No impact is identified for this issue area.

XV. Public Services

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
i. Fire Protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii. Police Protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii. Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv. Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
v. Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- ai) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Fire protection and emergency medical services in the project area are provided by the Imperial County Fire Department. The project site is located in the unincorporated area of Imperial County. According to the Seismic and Public Safety Element of the General Plan (County of Imperial 1997), the potential for a major fire in the unincorporated areas of the County is generally low. Primary access to the project site would be located off State Route (SR) 78 from the north and west, and across the IID aqueduct, via county roadways (Garvey Road and Andre Road). All access roads would be constructed to meet the County Fire Department’s standards. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Although the proposed project would be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable fire protection and other environmental, health, and safety requirements (e.g., CPUC safety standards), the project applicant will be required to consult with the Fire Department to address any fire safety and service concerns (i.e, battery energy storage system) so that adequate service is maintained. The project’s potentially significant impacts on fire services will be addressed in the EIR.
- aii) **Less than Significant Impact.** Police protection services in the project area is provided by the Imperial County Sheriff’s Department. Although the potential is low, the proposed project may attract vandals or other security risks and the increase in construction related traffic could increase demand on law enforcement services. Therefore, on-site security systems would be provided, and access would be limited to the areas surrounding the project site during construction and operation, thereby minimizing the need for police surveillance. Six-foot high chain link fencing topped with barbed wire would be installed around the perimeter of the project site at the commencement of construction and site access would be limited to authorized site workers. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates. In addition, a motion detection system and closed-circuit camera system may also be installed. The site would be remotely monitored 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. In addition, routine

unscheduled security rounds may be made by the security team monitoring the site security. Based on these considerations, the proposed project would not result in a need for police protection facility expansion and a less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.

- a) **No Impact.** The proposed project does not include the development of residential land uses that would result in an increase in population or student generation. Additionally, construction of the proposed project would not result in an increase in student population within the Imperial County's School District since it is anticipated that construction workers would commute in during construction operations. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.
- aiv) **No Impact.** Although maintenance of the project facility will require minimal site presence to perform periodic visual inspections and minor repairs, no full-time employees are required to operate the proposed project because the project facility will be monitored remotely. Therefore, substantial permanent increases in population that would adversely affect local parks is not expected. No impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.
- av) **No Impact.** Although maintenance of the project facility will require minimal site presence to perform periodic visual inspections and minor repairs, no full-time employees are required to operate the proposed project because the project facility will be monitored remotely. Therefore, substantial permanent increases in population that would adversely affect libraries and other public facilities (such as post offices) is not expected. The proposed project is not expected to have an impact on other public facilities such as post offices, and libraries. No impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.

XVI. Recreation

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** The proposed project would not generate new employment on a long-term basis. As such, the proposed project would not significantly increase the use or accelerate the deterioration of regional parks or other recreational facilities. The temporary increase of population during construction that might be caused by an influx of workers would be minimal and not cause a detectable increase in the use of parks. Additionally, the proposed project would not include or require the expansion of recreational facilities. impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.
- b) **No Impact.** Refer to response XVI. a) above.



XVII. Transportation

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Operation and maintenance would be conducted remotely, with minimal trips to the project site for panel washing and other solar and gen-tie line maintenance. Construction of the proposed project would result in a small increase of traffic to the area, which may result in a potentially significant impact and will be addressed in the EIR analysis.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Section 15064.3(b) of the CEQA Guidelines provides guidance on determining the significance of transportation impacts and focuses on the use of vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which is defined as the amount and distance of automobile travel associated with a project. Given the nature of the project, after construction, there would be a nominal amount of vehicle trips generated by the project. Once the proposed project is implemented, the proposed project would require intermittent maintenance requiring a negligible amount of traffic trips on an annual basis. However minimal, the proposed project would increase the number of vehicular trips related to construction and the need for intermittent maintenance on an annual basis. Therefore, this issue is potentially significant and will be addressed in the EIR analysis.
- c) **Less than Significant Impact.** To accommodate emergency access, PV panels would be spaced to maintain proper clearance. Proposed project facilities would be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable fire protection, CPUC safety standards, and other environmental, health, and safety requirements. Primary access to the project site would be located off SR-78 from the north and west, and across the IID aqueduct, via county roadways (Garvey Road and Andre Road). All access roads would be constructed to meet the County Fire Department’s standards. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Therefore, the proposed project would not increase hazards because of incompatible uses or design features, and impacts are considered less than significant.
- d) **Less than Significant Impact.** As previously stated, the PV panels would be spaced to maintain proper clearance. Proposed project facilities would be designed in accordance with applicable fire protection, CPUC safety standards, and other environmental, health, and

safety requirements. Primary access to the project site would be located off SR-78 from the north and west, and across the IID aqueduct, via county roadways (Garvey Road and Andre Road). All access roads would be constructed to meet the County Fire Department's standards. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Based on this context, impacts are considered less than significant.

XVIII. Tribal Cultural Resources

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:</i>				
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

a-b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** AB 52 was passed in 2014 and took effect July 1, 2015. It established a new category of environmental resources that must be considered under CEQA called tribal cultural resources (Public Resources Code 21074) and established a process for consulting with Native American tribes and groups regarding those resources. Assembly Bill 52 requires a lead agency to begin consultation with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project.

In accordance with AB 52, Imperial County, as the CEQA lead agency, sent an AB 52/SB 18 consultation request letter to California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area on July 1, 2022. This issue will be further analyzed in the EIR.

XIX. Utilities and Service Systems

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>Would the project:</i>				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Approximately 550-acre feet (AF) of water for dust suppression and site grading during construction would be required. Construction water needs would be limited to earthwork, soil conditioning, dust suppression, and compaction efforts. Water for construction and operation of the project would be obtained from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. Water would be picked up from a nearby lateral canal and delivered to the construction location by a water truck that would be capable of carrying approximately 4,000 gallons per load. The proposed project would not require the relocation, expansion, or construction of new storm drainage facilities because the proposed solar facility would not generate a significant increase in the amount of impervious surfaces that would increase runoff during storm events and exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems. Water from solar panel washing would continue to percolate through the ground, as a majority of the surfaces within the project site would remain pervious.

The wastewater generated during construction would be contained within portable toilet facilities and disposed of at an approved site. The minimal volume of wastewater generated during construction would not require the relocation expansion, or construction of wastewater treatment facilities.

Further, no habitable structures are proposed on the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power or natural gas.

The proposed project includes an approximately 4-mile gen-tie line that would connect to the IID's existing 161 kV "L" Line. Construction of the proposed gen-tie line could result in potentially significant environmental impacts. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects

Once fully constructed, estimated annual water consumption for operation and maintenance of the proposed project, including periodic PV module washing, would be approximately 20-acre feet annually (af/y), which would be water purchased from the IID and trucked to the project site as needed. Although water for solar panel washing and fire protection during project operation is not anticipated to result in a significant increase in water demand/use, the proposed project's potential impacts on water supplies will be addressed in the water supply assessment and EIR analysis.

- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Refer to response XIX. a) above.
- c) **Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed project would generate a minimal volume of wastewater during construction. During construction activities, wastewater would be contained within portable toilet facilities and disposed of at an approved site. Further, no habitable structures are proposed on the project site; therefore, there would be no wastewater generation from the proposed project during operation. The proposed project would not exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the RWQCB. Therefore, a less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.
- d) **Less than Significant Impact.** Solid waste generation would be minor for the construction and operation of the proposed project. Solid waste will be disposed of using a locally-licensed waste hauling service, most likely Allied Waste. Trash would likely be hauled to the Imperial Landfill (13-AA-0019) located approximately 14 miles southeast of the proposed project in Imperial. The Imperial Landfill has approximately 12,384,000 cubic yards of remaining capacity and is estimated to remain in operation through 2040 (CalRecycle 2022). Therefore, there is ample landfill capacity in the County to receive the minor amount of solid waste generated by construction and operation of the proposed project.

Additionally, because the proposed project would generate solid waste during construction and operation, they will be required to comply with state and local requirements for waste reduction and recycling; including the 1989 California Integrated Waste Management Act and the 1991 California Solid Waste Reuse and Recycling Access Act of 1991. Also, conditions of the conditional use permit will contain provisions for recycling and diversion of Imperial County construction waste policies. Therefore, a less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.

- e) **Less than Significant Impact.** Refer to response XIX. d) above.

XX. Wildfire

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<i>If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:</i>				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **No Impact.** According to the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Viewer provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the proposed project is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high hazard severity zones (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2022). Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. No impact is identified for this issue area.
- b) **No Impact.** The proposed project is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high hazard severity zones (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2007). Therefore, the proposed project would not exacerbate wildfire risks. No impact is identified for this issue area.
- c) **Less than Significant Impact.** Fire protection and emergency medical services in the area are provided by the Imperial County Fire Department. The proposed project is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high hazard severity zones (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2007). Further, the proposed project is located in an unincorporated area of Imperial County, which has a generally low potential for a major fire (County of Imperial 2016).

The project involves the installation of solar PV arrays panels, an on-site substation, battery storage system, gen-tie, inverters, transformers, underground electrical cables, and access roads. To accommodate emergency access, PV panels would be spaced to maintain proper

clearance. Proposed project facilities would be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with applicable fire protection, CPUC safety standards, and other environmental, health, and safety requirements. Primary access roads would be located off SR-78 78 from the north and west, and across the IID aqueduct, via county roadways (Garvey Road and Andre Road). All access roads would be constructed to meet the County Fire Department's standards. Points of ingress/egress would be accessed via locked gates that can be opened by any emergency responders. Water for emergency fire suppression would likely be provided from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. Water would be picked up from a nearby lateral canal and delivered to the construction location by a water truck that would be capable of carrying approximately 4,000 gallons per load. Therefore, operation and maintenance would not affect the ability of fire personnel to respond to fires or exacerbate fire risk and would continue to be adequately supported by the existing fire protection services. A less than significant impact is identified for this issue area.

- d) **No Impact.** The proposed project is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high hazard severity zones (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2007). Additionally, the proposed project would not expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. No impact is identified for this issue area and no further analysis is warranted.

XXI. Mandatory Findings of Significance

Environmental Issue Area:	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
Would the project:				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Impact Analysis

- a) **Potentially Significant Impact.** The proposed project has the potential to result in significant environmental effects on biological resources and cultural resources, which could directly or indirectly cause adverse effects on the environment. These issues will be further evaluated in the EIR.
- b) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Implementation of the proposed project has the potential to result in impacts related to: aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology/soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use/planning, noise, public services, transportation, tribal cultural resources, and utilities/service systems. The proposed project has the potential to result in cumulative impacts with regards to the identified issue areas. Cumulative impacts will be discussed and further analyzed in the EIR.
- c) **Potentially Significant Impact.** Implementation of the proposed project has the potential to result in impacts related to: air quality, geology/soils, GHG, and noise. These potential environmental effects could cause substantial adverse effects on human beings. These issues will be further evaluated in the EIR.

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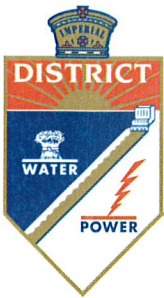
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Comment Letters Received on Notice of Preparation



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July 5, 2022

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Planning & Development Services Department
County of Imperial
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project

Dear Mr. Black:

On June 28, 2022 the Imperial Irrigation District received from the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, a request for agency comments on the Administrative Draft Initial Study and Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project. The project consists of an 80 MW solar energy generation facility and substation, a 160 MW battery energy storage system and an electrical gen-tie transmission line to connect to the Imperial IID 161 kV "L" Line. The project will be located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land (APN 034-160-002) in unincorporated Imperial County, approximately 6 miles south of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of Brawley, CA and about 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland, CA.

The Imperial Irrigation District has reviewed the information and has the following comments:

1. If the project requires temporary construction or permanent distribution-rated electrical service (15 kilovolts or less), the applicant should be advised to contact Gabriel Ramirez, IID Customer Project Development Planner, at (760) 339-9257 or e-mail Mr. Ramirez at gramirez@iid.com to initiate the customer service application process. In addition to submitting a formal application (available for download at the district website <http://www.iid.com/home/showdocument?id=12923>), the applicant will be required submit a complete set of plans approved by the County of Imperial (in hardcopy and AutoCad formats), one-line diagrams, electrical loads and panel schedules, electrical panel specifications (size, voltage and location), project schedule, and the estimated in-service date, in addition to the applicable fees, permits, easements and environmental compliance documentation pertaining to the provision of electrical service to the project. The applicant shall be responsible for all costs and mitigation measures related to providing electrical service to the project.
2. Distribution-rated electrical service is limited in the area. A circuit study may be required. Any improvements or mitigation identified in the circuit study to enable the provision of electrical service shall be the financial and permitting responsibility of the applicant.
3. The project is located on APN 034-160-002-000 which is outside IID's Water Service Area. However, the Westside Main Canal is located to the north and west of the project site and

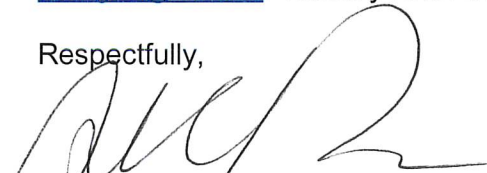
could be impacted by the project. The applicant may not use IID's canal or drain banks to access the project site. Any abandonment of easements or facilities shall be approved by IID based on systems (Irrigation, Drainage, Power, etc.) needs.

4. To insure there are no impacts to IID facilities, applicant should submit project plans to IID Water Department Engineering Services for review and comment prior to final project design and CUP approval. IID WDES can be contacted at (760) 339-9265 for further information on this matter.
5. Any construction or operation on IID property or within its existing and proposed right of way or easements including but not limited to: surface improvements such as proposed new streets, driveways, parking lots, landscape; and all water, sewer, storm water, or any other above ground or underground utilities; will require an encroachment permit, or encroachment agreement (depending on the circumstances). A copy of the IID encroachment permit application and instructions for its completion are available at <https://www.iid.com/about-iid/department-directory/real-estate>. The IID Real Estate Section should be contacted at (760) 339-9239 for additional information regarding encroachment permits or agreements.
6. In addition to IID's recorded easements, IID claims, at a minimum, a prescriptive right of way to the toe of slope of all existing canals and drains. Where space is limited and depending upon the specifics of adjacent modifications, the IID may claim additional secondary easements/prescriptive rights of ways to ensure operation and maintenance of IID's facilities can be maintained and are not impacted and if impacted mitigated. Thus, IID should be consulted prior to the installation of any facilities adjacent to IID's facilities. Certain conditions may be placed on adjacent facilities to mitigate or avoid impacts to IID's facilities
7. Any new, relocated, modified or reconstructed IID facilities required for and by the project (which can include but is not limited to electrical utility substations, electrical transmission and distribution lines, water deliveries, canals, drains, etc.) need to be included as part of the project's CEQA and/or NEPA documentation, environmental impact analysis and mitigation. Failure to do so will result in postponement of any construction and/or modification of IID facilities until such time as the environmental documentation is amended and environmental impacts are fully analyzed. **Any and all mitigation necessary as a result of the construction, relocation and/or upgrade of IID facilities is the responsibility of the project proponent.**
8. Dividing a project into two or more pieces and evaluating each piece in a separate environmental document (Piecemealing or Segmenting), rather than evaluating the whole of the project in one environmental document, is explicitly forbidden by CEQA, because dividing a project into a number of pieces would allow a Lead Agency to minimize the apparent environmental impacts of a project by evaluating individual pieces separately, each of which may have a less-than-significant impact on the environment, but which together may result in a significant impact. Segmenting a project may also hinder developing comprehensive mitigation strategies. In general, if an activity or facility is necessary for the operation of a project, or necessary to achieve the project objectives, or a reasonably foreseeable consequence of approving the project, then it should be

considered an integral project component that should be analyzed within the environmental analysis. The project description should include all project components, including those that will have to be approved by responsible agencies. The State CEQA Guidelines define a project under CEQA as “the whole of the action” that may result either directly or indirectly in physical changes to the environment. This broad definition is intended to provide the maximum protection of the environment. CEQA case law has established general principles on project segmentation for different project types. For a project requiring construction of offsite infrastructure, the offsite infrastructure must be included in the project description. *San Joaquin Raptor/Wildlife Rescue Center v. County of Stanislaus* (1994) 27 Cal.App. 4th 713.

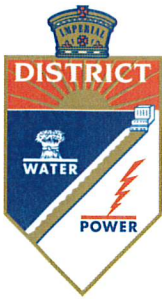
Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-482-3609 or at dvargas@iid.com. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,



Donald Vargas
Compliance Administrator II

Enrique B. Martinez – General Manager
Mike Pacheco – Manager, Water Dept.
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Constance Bergmark – Deputy Mgr. Energy Dept., Energy Business, Regulatory & Transactions Admin.
Wayne K. Strumpfer, General Counsel
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July 5, 2022

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Planning & Development Services Department
County of Imperial
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project – Additional Comments

Dear Mr. Black:

In addition to the comment letter the Imperial Irrigation District submitted to the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department on this date, pursuant to the ICPDSD's request for agency comments on the Administrative Draft Initial Study and Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project, the IID has the following concerns:

1. The applicant has indicated to IID through the interconnection process that the project is a 75 MW photovoltaic/energy storage project, meaning the project is a hybrid facility with 75 MW of PV and 75 MW of energy storage. The Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR indicate a 80 MW PV and 160 MW BESS facility.
2. In the *Project Description* document, there is mention of a switching station to be built at the customer site (figure 2-4 and section 2.3.3). IID Transmission Planning has provided a draft facility study proposing the SS to be owned by IID and located adjacent to IID's 161kV "L" Line. This would mitigate the need for a 4-mile double circuit 161kV Line. The applicant is currently reviewing this alternative.
3. In the *Project Description* document, Section 2.3.4 Gen-Tie Line, with the recommendation of placing the SS adjacent the 161kV "L" Line, the 4-mile gen-tie would be single circuit wood poles and could very well fit within a 60 ft. right of way. IID is still pending the applicant's acceptance of the facility study but if the "L" Line would be looped in and out to the SS at the customer site, the "gen-tie" would be 4 miles of double circuit steel poles and would require at least 100-120 ft. ROW.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-482-3609 or at dvargas@iid.com. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,

Donald Vargas
Compliance Administrator II

Enrique B. Martinez – General Manager
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August 3, 2022

11-IMP-86
PM 31.288

VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project
NOP of a DEIR/SCH#2022070146

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Imperial County, Planning and Development Services Department
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

Dear Mr. Black:

Thank you for including the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in the environmental review process for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project (SCH#2022070146) located near State Route 86 (SR-86). The mission of Caltrans is to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment. The Local Development Review (LDR) Program reviews land use projects and plans to ensure consistency with our mission and state planning priorities.

Caltrans has the following comments:

Traffic Impact Study

- A Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT) based Traffic Impact Study (TIS) should be provided for this project. Please use the Governor's Office of Planning and Research Guidance to identify VMT related impacts.¹ Or please provide justification on VMT Exemption.
- The TIS may also need to identify the proposed project's near-term and long-term safety or operational issues, on or adjacent to any existing or proposed State facilities.

¹ California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) December 2018. "Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA." <https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/sb-743/>

Hauling

Caltrans has discretionary authority with respect to highways under its jurisdiction and may, upon application and if good cause appears, issue a special permit to operate or move a vehicle or combination of vehicles or special mobile equipment of a size or weight of vehicle or load exceeding the maximum limitations specified in the California Vehicle Code. The Caltrans Transportation Permits Issuance Branch is responsible for the issuance of these special transportation permits for oversize/overweight vehicles on the State Highway network. Additional information is provided online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/trafficops/permits/index.html>

Environmental

Caltrans welcomes the opportunity to be a Responsible Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as we have some discretionary authority of a portion of the project that is in Caltrans' Right-of-Way (R/W) through the form of an encroachment permit process. We look forward to the coordination of our efforts to ensure that Caltrans can adopt the alternative and/or mitigation measure for our R/W. We would appreciate meeting with you to discuss the elements of the EIR that Caltrans will use for our subsequent environmental compliance.

An encroachment permit will be required for any work within the Caltrans' R/W prior to construction. As part of the encroachment permit process, the applicant must provide approved final environmental documents for this project, corresponding technical studies, and necessary regulatory and resource agency permits. Specifically, CEQA determination or exemption. The supporting documents must address all environmental impacts within the Caltrans' R/W and address any impacts from avoidance and/or mitigation measures.

We recommend that this project specifically identifies and assesses potential impacts caused by the project or impacts from mitigation efforts that occur within Caltrans' R/W that includes impacts to the natural environment, infrastructure including but not limited to highways, roadways, structures, intelligent transportation systems elements, on-ramps and off-ramps, and appurtenant features including but not limited to lighting, signage, drainage, guardrail, slopes, and landscaping. Caltrans is interested in any additional mitigation measures identified for the project's draft Environmental Document.

Mitigation

Caltrans endeavors that any direct and cumulative impacts to the State Highway network be eliminated or reduced to a level of insignificance pursuant to the CEQA and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.

Mr. David Black, Planner IV
August 3, 2022
Page 3

Mitigation measures to State facilities should be included in TIS/TIA. Mitigation identified in the traffic study, subsequent environmental documents, and mitigation monitoring reports, should be coordinated with Caltrans to identify, and implement the appropriate mitigation. This includes the actual implementation and collection of any "fair share" monies, as well as the appropriate timing of the mitigation. Mitigation improvements should be compatible with Caltrans concepts.

Right-of-Way

- Any work performed within Caltrans' R/W will require discretionary review and approval by Caltrans and an encroachment permit will be required for any work within the Caltrans' R/W prior to construction.

Additional information regarding encroachment permits may be obtained by contacting the Caltrans Permits Office at (619) 688-6158 or emailing D11.Permits@dot.ca.gov or by visiting the website at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/ep>. Early coordination with Caltrans is strongly advised for all encroachment permits.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Charlie Lecourtois, LDR Coordinator, at (619) 985-4766 or by e-mail sent to Charlie.Lecourtois@dot.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Maurice A. Eaton

MAURICE EATON
Branch Chief
Local Development Review



California Program Office

980 Ninth Street, Suite 1730 | Sacramento, California 95814 | 916-313-5800
www.defenders.org

August 12, 2022

David Black, Planner IV
Imperial County, Planning and Development Services Department
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

Delivered via email to: davidblack@co.imperial.ca.us

RE: Comments on Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report and Initial Study for the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project (SCH 2022070146)

Dear Mr. Black:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study (NOP/IS) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project (Project). These comments are submitted on behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) and our nearly 2.2 million members and supporters in the United States, 323,000 of which reside in California.

Defenders is dedicated to protecting all wild animals and plants in their natural communities. To that end, Defenders employs science, public education and participation, media, legislative advocacy, litigation and proactive on-the-ground solutions in order to prevent the extinction of species, associated loss of biological diversity, and habitat alteration and destruction.

Defenders strongly supports responsible energy development that will help meet California's emission reduction goals. A low carbon energy future is critical for California – for our economy, our communities, and the environment. Achieving this future—and *how* we achieve it—is critical for protecting California's internationally treasured wildlife, landscapes, productive farmlands and diverse habitats.

As we transition toward a clean energy future, it is imperative for our future and the future of our wild places and wildlife that we strike a balance between addressing the near-term impact of solar development with the long-term impacts of climate change on our biological diversity,

fish and wildlife habitat, and natural landscapes. To ensure that the proper balance is achieved, we need smart planning for renewable power that avoids and minimizes adverse impacts on wildlife and lands with known high-resource values. We believe energy projects must be sited in a manner that avoids or minimizes impacts to wildlife and wild habitat, and where necessary, unavoidable impacts must be offset through mitigation.

The Project is located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land located in unincorporated Imperial County. It is located 6 miles south of the Salton Sea, 10 miles west of the City of Brawley, 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmoreland, directly south of Andre Road and 0.50 mile and west of the Westside Main Canal. The Project is an 80 MW photovoltaic solar facility with an integrated 160 MW battery energy storage system and includes an approximately 4-mile electrical generator intertie (gen-tie) that would be located on federal lands managed by the BLM within the California Desert Conservation Area. The gen-tie would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's existing 161 kilovolt "L" line.

The Project site is located on land designated Agriculture by the Imperial County General Plan and is currently zoned as Open Space/Preservation. The Project site is not currently being used for agricultural production and the Project would not convert any agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.

Our Comments on the NOP/IS for the Project are as follows:

1. **Affected special-status species:** Defenders is primarily concerned with the impact of the project on special-status species. Regarding these species, the NOP/IS states *"...a potentially significant impact is identified for this issue area. A biological resources report and aquatic resources delineation report that will address the proposed project's potential impacts on biological resources will be prepared and included in the EIR analysis."*

Defenders recommends the County consult with Trustee and Responsible wildlife agencies to determine the scope and protocols for the biological surveys needed to support the biological resources analysis in the EIR. The surveys should be conducted for the following species:

- A. **Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*):** The Project is located within the range of the burrowing owl, a species listed as a Species of Special Concern by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). It is estimated that there are fewer than 10,000 breeding pairs of burrowing owls and most exist on privately

owned land.¹ A map showing the species distribution and suitable habitat for the species is available here:

<https://databasin.org/maps/0cfc0cb507bb4bb8bf8689e7aa1d6e97/active/>

At a minimum, the surveys should follow the recommendations listed within the within the State of California's Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation.² If the burrowing owls are observed on or adjacent to the Project site based on the survey, the DEIR must, at a minimum, include avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures for the species based on those listed within the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation.

- B. **Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*):** The project is located within the range of the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL), a species protected by a multiagency conservation agreement in Arizona and California.³ The FTHL has the most limited range within the U.S. of any horned lizard species and is primarily located within the Imperial and Coachella Valleys.⁴ A map showing the species distribution and suitable habitat for the species is available here:

<https://databasin.org/maps/5fdbf62564624f72bf388c4e4ea424e1/active/>

We recommend that a survey for the FTHL be performed that, at a minimum, conforms to the current survey standards established in the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Rangewide Management Strategy prepared by the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Interagency Coordinating Committee. If the species is observed on or adjacent to the Project site based on the survey, the DEIR must include avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures for FTHL that are developed in consultation with CDFW.

- C. **Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)**

The NOP/IS for the Project fails to adequately account for the special status species that have potential to be located on or adjacent to the Project site. The Swainson's Hawk is listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act. The project site located on land where the species could be present, and we recommend that a survey for the species be conducted that, at a minimum,

¹ California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2012. Staff report on burrowing owl mitigation. The 7 March 2012 memo replacing 1995 staff report, State of California Natural resources Agency, Department of Fish and Wildlife. Sacramento, California.

² Ibid.

³ California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Flat Tailed Horned Lizard Conservation Efforts. <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Regions/6/Flat-Tailed-Horned-Lizard>

⁴ Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Interagency Coordinating Committee. 2003. Flat-tailed horned lizard rangewide management strategy, 2003 revision.

conforms to CDFW and the California Energy Commission's survey guidelines.⁵ A map showing the predicted occupied habitat for the species is located here: <https://databasin.org/maps/new/#datasets=addeef3693ef43328697572f663ef587>

If the species is observed on or adjacent to the Project site based on the survey, the DEIR must include avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures developed in consultation with CDFW.

The DEIR must address both direct impacts from the proposed Project and cumulative impacts to the species and habitat. Defenders recommends avoidance and minimization measures should be exhausted before the compensatory mitigation options are considered.

2. **Coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM):** Defenders recommends coordination with BLM in examining the impacts of the Project on the public lands in California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and ensuring there is no impact on the West Mesa Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The Project includes the construction, operation and maintenance of an approximately 4-mile gen-tie transmission line that would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's existing 161 kilovolt "L" line. The line would be located entirely on land managed by the BLM within the CDCA. The NOP/IS states a portion of the gen-tie line falls within the Renewable Energy Development Focus Area, however if the project impacts habitat within the California Desert National Conserved Lands, there is potential for significant impact. Additionally, the West Mesa ACEC is in close proximity to the project site. It is essential that the County closely coordinate with BLM to identify and analyze potential impacts of the Project on BLM lands and ensure appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation of any adverse impacts.

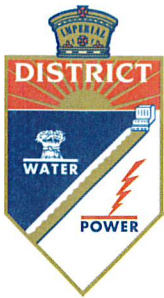
Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide scoping comments for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project NOP/IS and for considering our comments. We look forward to reviewing the EIR and request to be notified when it is available. If you have any questions, please contact me at 408-603-4694 or via email at smarkowska@defenders.org.

⁵ California Energy Commission and Department of Fish and Game. 2010. Swainson's Hawk Survey Protocols, Impact Avoidance, and Minimization Measures for Renewable Projects in the Antelope Valley for Los Angeles and Kern Counties, California.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sophia Markowska". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sophia Markowska
Senior California Representative



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August 15, 2022

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Planning & Development Services Department
County of Imperial
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: NOP of a Draft EIR For Vega SES6 Solar and Battery Storage Project

Dear Mr. Black:

On July 11, 2022 the Imperial Irrigation District received from the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, the Notice of Preparation of an Draft Environmental Impact Report for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project. The project proposes a 80 MW solar energy generation facility and substation, a 160 MW battery energy storage system and an electrical gen-tie transmission line to connect to the Imperial IID 161 kV "L" Line. The project will be located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land (APN 034-160-002) in unincorporated Imperial County, approximately 6 miles south of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of Brawley, CA and about 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland, CA.

The IID has reviewed the documents and finds that the comments provided in the July 5, 2022 district letters on the project's Administrative Draft Initial Study and NOP of an EIR (see attached letters) continue to apply.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-482-3609 or at dvargas@iid.com. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,

Donald Vargas
Compliance Administrator II

Enrique B. Martinez – General Manager
Mike Pacheco – Manager, Water Dept.
Jamie Asbury – Manager, Energy Dept.
Constance Bergmark – Deputy Mgr. Energy Dept., Energy Business, Regulatory & Transactions Admin.
Geoffrey Holbrook – Interim General Counsel
Michael P. Kemp – Superintendent, Regulatory & Environmental Compliance
Laura Cervantes. – Supervisor, Real Estate
Jessica Humes – Environmental Project Mgr. Sr., Water Dept.



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July 5, 2022

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Planning & Development Services Department
County of Imperial
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project

Dear Mr. Black:

On June 28, 2022 the Imperial Irrigation District received from the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, a request for agency comments on the Administrative Draft Initial Study and Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project. The project consists of an 80 MW solar energy generation facility and substation, a 160 MW battery energy storage system and an electrical gen-tie transmission line to connect to the Imperial IID 161 kV "L" Line. The project will be located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land (APN 034-160-002) in unincorporated Imperial County, approximately 6 miles south of the Salton Sea; 10 miles west of Brawley, CA and about 5 miles southwest of the community of Westmorland, CA.

The Imperial Irrigation District has reviewed the information and has the following comments:

1. If the project requires temporary construction or permanent distribution-rated electrical service (15 kilovolts or less), the applicant should be advised to contact Gabriel Ramirez, IID Customer Project Development Planner, at (760) 339-9257 or e-mail Mr. Ramirez at gramirez@iid.com to initiate the customer service application process. In addition to submitting a formal application (available for download at the district website <http://www.iid.com/home/showdocument?id=12923>), the applicant will be required submit a complete set of plans approved by the County of Imperial (in hardcopy and AutoCad formats), one-line diagrams, electrical loads and panel schedules, electrical panel specifications (size, voltage and location), project schedule, and the estimated in-service date, in addition to the applicable fees, permits, easements and environmental compliance documentation pertaining to the provision of electrical service to the project. The applicant shall be responsible for all costs and mitigation measures related to providing electrical service to the project.
2. Distribution-rated electrical service is limited in the area. A circuit study may be required. Any improvements or mitigation identified in the circuit study to enable the provision of electrical service shall be the financial and permitting responsibility of the applicant.
3. The project is located on APN 034-160-002-000 which is outside IID's Water Service Area. However, the Westside Main Canal is located to the north and west of the project site and

could be impacted by the project. The applicant may not use IID's canal or drain banks to access the project site. Any abandonment of easements or facilities shall be approved by IID based on systems (Irrigation, Drainage, Power, etc.) needs.

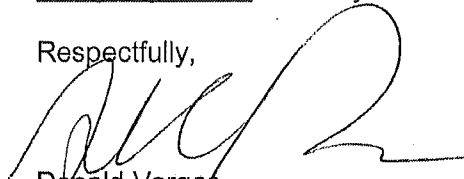
4. To insure there are no impacts to IID facilities, applicant should submit project plans to IID Water Department Engineering Services for review and comment prior to final project design and CUP approval. IID WDES can be contacted at (760) 339-9265 for further information on this matter.
5. Any construction or operation on IID property or within its existing and proposed right of way or easements including but not limited to: surface improvements such as proposed new streets, driveways, parking lots, landscape; and all water, sewer, storm water, or any other above ground or underground utilities; will require an encroachment permit, or encroachment agreement (depending on the circumstances). A copy of the IID encroachment permit application and instructions for its completion are available at <https://www.iid.com/about-iid/department-directory/real-estate>. The IID Real Estate Section should be contacted at (760) 339-9239 for additional information regarding encroachment permits or agreements.
6. In addition to IID's recorded easements, IID claims, at a minimum, a prescriptive right of way to the toe of slope of all existing canals and drains. Where space is limited and depending upon the specifics of adjacent modifications, the IID may claim additional secondary easements/prescriptive rights of ways to ensure operation and maintenance of IID's facilities can be maintained and are not impacted and if impacted mitigated. Thus, IID should be consulted prior to the installation of any facilities adjacent to IID's facilities. Certain conditions may be placed on adjacent facilities to mitigate or avoid impacts to IID's facilities
7. Any new, relocated, modified or reconstructed IID facilities required for and by the project (which can include but is not limited to electrical utility substations, electrical transmission and distribution lines, water deliveries, canals, drains, etc.) need to be included as part of the project's CEQA and/or NEPA documentation, environmental impact analysis and mitigation. Failure to do so will result in postponement of any construction and/or modification of IID facilities until such time as the environmental documentation is amended and environmental impacts are fully analyzed. **Any and all mitigation necessary as a result of the construction, relocation and/or upgrade of IID facilities is the responsibility of the project proponent.**
8. Dividing a project into two or more pieces and evaluating each piece in a separate environmental document (Piecemealing or Segmenting), rather than evaluating the whole of the project in one environmental document, is explicitly forbidden by CEQA, because dividing a project into a number of pieces would allow a Lead Agency to minimize the apparent environmental impacts of a project by evaluating individual pieces separately, each of which may have a less-than-significant impact on the environment, but which together may result in a significant impact. Segmenting a project may also hinder developing comprehensive mitigation strategies. In general, if an activity or facility is necessary for the operation of a project, or necessary to achieve the project objectives, or a reasonably foreseeable consequence of approving the project, then it should be

David Black
July 5, 2022
Page 3

considered an integral project component that should be analyzed within the environmental analysis. The project description should include all project components, including those that will have to be approved by responsible agencies. The State CEQA Guidelines define a project under CEQA as "the whole of the action" that may result either directly or indirectly in physical changes to the environment. This broad definition is intended to provide the maximum protection of the environment. CEQA case law has established general principles on project segmentation for different project types. For a project requiring construction of offsite infrastructure, the offsite infrastructure must be included in the project description. *San Joaquin Raptor/Wildlife Rescue Center v. County of Stanislaus* (1994) 27 Cal.App. 4th 713.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-482-3609 or at dvargas@iid.com. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,



Donald Vargas
Compliance Administrator II

Enrique B. Martinez – General Manager
Mike Pacheco – Manager, Water Dept.
Jamie Asbury – Manager, Energy Dept.
Constance Bergmark – Deputy Mgr. Energy Dept., Energy Business, Regulatory & Transactions Admin.
Wayne K. Strumpfer, General Counsel
Michael P. Kemp – Superintendent, Regulatory & Environmental Compliance
Laura Cervantes. – Supervisor, Real Estate
Jessica Humes – Environmental Project Mgr. Sr., Water Dept.



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July 5, 2022

Mr. David Black
Planner IV
Planning & Development Services Department
County of Imperial
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project – Additional Comments

Dear Mr. Black:

In addition to the comment letter the Imperial Irrigation District submitted to the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department on this date, pursuant to the ICPDSD's request for agency comments on the Administrative Draft Initial Study and Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project, the IID has the following concerns:

1. The applicant has indicated to IID through the interconnection process that the project is a 75 MW photovoltaic/energy storage project, meaning the project is a hybrid facility with 75 MW of PV and 75 MW of energy storage. The Administrative Draft IS and NOP of an EIR indicate a 80 MW PV and 160 MW BESS facility.
2. In the *Project Description* document, there is mention of a switching station to be built at the customer site (figure 2-4 and section 2.3.3). IID Transmission Planning has provided a draft facility study proposing the SS to be owned by IID and located adjacent to IID's 161kV "L" Line. This would mitigate the need for a 4-mile double circuit 161kV Line. The applicant is currently reviewing this alternative.
3. In the *Project Description* document, Section 2.3.4 Gen-Tie Line, with the recommendation of placing the SS adjacent the 161kV "L" Line, the 4-mile gen-tie would be single circuit wood poles and could very well fit within a 60 ft. right of way. IID is still pending the applicant's acceptance of the facility study but if the "L" Line would be looped in and out to the SS at the customer site, the "gen-tie" would be 4 miles of double circuit steel poles and would require at least 100-120 ft. ROW.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-482-3609 or at dvargas@iid.com. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Respectfully,

Donald Vargas
Compliance Administrator II

Enrique B. Martinez – General Manager
Mike Pacheco – Manager, Water Dept.
Jamie Asbury – Manager, Energy Dept.
Constance Bergmark – Deputy Mgr. Energy Dept., Energy Business, Regulatory & Transactions Admin.
Wayne K. Strumpfer, General Counsel
Michael P. Kemp – Superintendent, Regulatory & Environmental Compliance
Laura Cervantes. – Supervisor, Real Estate
Jessica Humes – Environmental Project Mgr. Sr., Water Dept.



August 17, 2022

Jim Minnick, Director
Imperial County Planning & Development Services
801 Main Street
El Centro, CA 92243

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for VEGA SES 6
Solar and Battery Storage Project

Dear Mr. Minnick:

The Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (Air District) received your notice and has the following general comments on the scope of the review for the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage (Project). As you know, the Air District's established programs help to keep the quality of air in Imperial County from declining. The programs, Rules and Regulations of the Air District in conjunction with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the most current CEQA Air Quality Handbook for Imperial County (CEQA Handbook), and the Air District's State Implementation Plans (SIP's) for Ozone, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ work together to assure that air quality improves or does not degrade. Currently, the non-attainment status of "moderate" for ozone, "moderate" for PM_{2.5} and the maintenance requirements for PM₁₀ are the driving criteria in establishing the thresholds for NO_x, ROG, PM₁₀, SO_x and CO found in the CEQA Handbook. These thresholds and their significance are explained under Section 6 of the CEQA handbook, which describes the preparation of an Air Quality Analysis for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for nonrenewable projects. The Air District will look closely at the potential impacts, both direct and indirect, as a result of the proposed project.

When exploring the impacts of solar farm projects, it is a common misconception that these types of projects are not a significant source of air pollution. While it is true that solar projects that do not employ fuel based combustion units as supplemental power are typically cleaner projects operationally, in most cases construction and cumulative impacts have the potential to cause adverse air quality impacts. Solar farms in Imperial County, historically, have been placed under time pressures for completion that are typically not discussed or evaluated within an

Environmental Impact Report. These potential changes in timeline affect the level of pollutant concentrations, specifically, those emissions related to NOx. Similarly, during operations, because there are several functioning solar farms in Imperial County, cumulative emissions of PM10 have the potential to elevate or cause an exceedance of the Standard. Thus, experience has demonstrated that shortened construction periods not previously analyzed during the CEQA process creates a potential for elevated levels of NOx emissions, as well as elevated levels of PM10 during operations. In regards to the storage portion of this project, Battery Energy Storage Systems are a relatively new type of project within Imperial County and the Air District is still evaluating their possible impacts. For your convenience below are highlights of the elements involved in an **Air Quality Analysis**.

A thorough analysis should include a description, impacts and health consequences of all air quality and emissions. The analysis should be conducted using APCD approved modeling factors.¹ The analysis should include short and long term emissions as well as daily and yearly emission calculations. Project alternatives should be included along with a thorough emissions analysis. A description of the County's attainment status, both at the state and federal levels, as well as any regulatory restrictions to the project, should be included. All temporary construction and grading impacts should quantify fugitive dust and combustion emissions and propose mitigation measures.

Therefore, a thorough analysis should be performed in order to assess the level of significance of potential impacts of this solar farm project. This analysis should include an overview containing a complete description of the Project (including the proposed Battery Energy Storage System component) in its current existing conditions, what the proposed development will be, how that will change the existing conditions, and should disclose the mitigations and conditions that would assist in keeping pollutant emissions below the thresholds. These questions are designed to assess the project's level of significance before and after proposed mitigation. Compliance with **Regulation VIII** is required for all construction activities, including a **Construction Dust control Plan (CDCP)**, as well as **notification 10 days prior** to the commencement of all construction activities.

In order to identify NO_x emissions created during the construction phase of the solar project, a **Construction Equipment List** detailing the equipment type, make, model, year, horsepower, hours of **daily** operation, date arrived onsite, and date removed from site should be provided to the Air District in Excel format.² This is to ensure NO_x emissions during the construction period

¹ Such as using the most current CalEEMod.

² The Equipment List submittal will require a written commitment by the applicant to a submittal schedule agreed upon between the applicant and the Air District

remain under the CEQA thresholds of significance.

In regards to cumulative impacts, which occur during the operational phase of solar farm projects, PM₁₀ is of main concern. Therefore, an **Operational Dust Control Plan (ODCP)** is required detailing how dust emissions will be controlled and maintained during the operational phase of the project.³ An initial site visit is required to confirm the elements of any draft ODCP before it can be finalized by the Air District. After this, continual site visits will typically occur on a yearly basis. Please note that an ODCP is intended to provide pertinent information specific to your operation for the reduction of fugitive dust emissions created by the ongoing operations at your facility.

Our rules and regulations can be found on our website at <https://apcd.imperialcounty.org> under the Rules & Regulations. If any questions arise, please feel free to contact our office at (442) 265-1800.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ismael Garcia', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ismael Garcia
Environmental Coordinator I

Via Email
Reviewed by,
Monica Soucier
APC Division Manager

³ The ODCP needs to be approved prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy.