

**Imperial County
Planning & Development Services Department
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT EIR FOR THE VEGA SES 6 SOLAR AND BATTERY STORAGE
PROJECT**

FEBRUARY 26TH 2024

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, as lead agency, is circulating for public review a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the proposed VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project (VEGA 6) EIR.

PROJECT TITLE: VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project EIR (SCH #2022070146).

PROJECT LOCATION: The solar energy facility site is located on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned vacant land on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 034-160-002) in the unincorporated Imperial County, California. 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 proposed gen-tie line would be approximately 4-miles long and would connect to the Imperial Irrigation District's (IID) existing 161 kV "L" transmission line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within the California Desert Conservation Area planning area.

Energy generated by the VEGA 6 project will be transmitted to IID's existing 161 kV "L" Line, with ultimate delivery to IID's Ramon Substation in Riverside County. The existing Ramon Substation is located on a single parcel (APN 651-230-015) in unincorporated Riverside County, generally northeast of Cathedral City, north of the Interstate-10 Freeway. The existing substation currently occupies approximately 6.7 acres of the 11.26-acre parcel.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed VEGA 6 project involves the construction and operation of an 80 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar facility with an integrated 160 MW battery storage system (BESS) on approximately 320 acres of privately-owned land. The proposed VEGA 6 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 proposed gen-tie line would be approximately 4-miles long and would connect to the IID's existing 161 kV "L" transmission line. The entire gen-tie route would be on federal lands managed by the BLM. The project applicant has filed a right-of-way grant application with the BLM for a permit to construct, operate, and maintain the gen-tie line.

Energy generated by the VEGA 6 project will be transmitted to IID's existing 161 kV "L" Line, with ultimate delivery to IID's Ramon Substation in Riverside County. IID has identified that upgrades to the Ramon Substation will be required in order to accommodate several planned utility-scale projects, including the VEGA 6 project. Upgrades to the Ramon Substation would involve expansion of an approximately 4-acre area immediately adjacent to the existing substation. The proposed upgrades to the Ramon Substation are necessary infrastructure improvements to accommodate several planned utility-scale projects, including the VEGA 6 project, to connect to the IID grid. Because it is a necessary infrastructure improvement to allow the VEGA 6 project to connect to the IID grid, the Ramon Substation expansion is considered a connected project for the purposes of CEQA review.

IID is a Responsible Agency as defined by CEQA Guideline Section 15381 as it relates to the proposed Ramon Substation improvements. In this capacity, the IID has the discretionary authority

to approve improvements to the existing Ramon Substation, and would utilize the information contained in the EIR, as prepared by the County of Imperial as the CEQA Lead Agency, as the CEQA clearance for the substation improvements. The existing Ramon Substation is currently operating under an approved Public Use Permit. IID would request an amendment to its Public Use Permit for the proposed Ramon Substation expansion from the County of Riverside.

DESIGNATED AREA PLAN: The VEGA 6 project site is located outside of the County's Renewable Energy Overlay Zone with a General Plan Designation of Agriculture. The current zoning for the VEGA 6 project site is Open Space/Preservation (S-2).

The project applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to include/classify the VEGA 6 project site into the RE Overlay Zone. The project requires the approval of a Conditional Use Permit by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated BESS on land zoned S-2.

Water Supply Assessment: Implementation of the project requires the approval of a Water Supply Assessment (WSA).

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/Climate Change; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology/Water Quality; Land Use/Planning; Noise; Public Services; Transportation; Tribal Cultural Resources; Utilities and Service Systems including water supply; Cumulative Impacts; and, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

COMMENTS REQUESTED: Written comments regarding the Draft EIR should be directed to David Black, Planner IV, Imperial County Planning & Development Services Department, 801 Main Street, El Centro, CA 92243 and must be received **no later than April 16th, 2024** (public review period starts on February 26, 2024).

The Final EIR will address and incorporate public input and comments for the consideration by the Imperial County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors at future public meetings.

For environmental review information for this project, please contact David Black at (442) 265-1736.

This notice was published in the Imperial Valley Press on Saturday February 24, 2024.