Planning Department
168 North Edwards Street
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Independence, California 93526

Phone: (760) 878-0263
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RECIRCULATED

DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND INITIAL STUDY

PROJECT TITLE: Renewable Energy Permit 2022-01/Barker- Trona 7

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project is located approximately 3 miles north of the unincorporated community of Trona, California. The Trona Airport sits roughly 1.3 miles to the northeast. The property is on private land owned by Robbie Barker, with an Assessor's Parcel Number of 038-330-46

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is applying for a Renewable Energy Permit to construct a 1.2 Megawatt (MW) photovoltaic solar facility using approximately 2,300 single-axis tracker solar panels that will connect to the existing Southern California Edison (SCE) 33-kV transmission line passing through the area. The five-acre site is graded and highly disturbed, flat or gently sloped, and has no natural vegetation, habitat, water features or structures. The site is approximately 0.3 miles west of Trona Wildrose Road, which is not a designated scenic highway or scenic corridor.

FINDINGS:

A. The proposed project is consistent with goals and objectives of the Inyo County General Plan.

B. The proposed project is consistent with the provisions of the Inyo County Zoning Ordinance.

C. Potential adverse environmental impacts will not exceed thresholds of significance, either individually or cumulatively.

D. Based upon the environmental evaluation of the proposed project, the Planning Department finds that the project does not have the potential to create a significant adverse impact on flora or fauna; natural, scenic, and historic resources; the local economy; public health, safety, and welfare. This constitutes a Mitigated Negative Finding for the Mandatory Findings required by Section 15065 of the CEQA Guidelines.

The 30-day public review period for this Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration will expire on August 20, 2023. Inyo County is not required to respond to any comments received after this date.

Additional information is available from the Inyo County Planning Department. Please contact Project Planner Cynthia Draper (760-878-0265) if you have any questions regarding this project.

Cathreen Richards
Director, Inyo County Planning Department

7/19/2023
Date

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INYO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX G: CEQA INITIAL STUDY & ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

1. Project title: Renewable Energy Permit 2022-01/Barker-Trona 7

2. Lead agency name and address: Inyo County Planning Department, PO Drawer L, Independence, CA 93526

3. Contact person and phone number: Cynthia Draper: (760) 878-0265

4. Project location: The property is on private land owned by Robbie Barker, Assessor parcel number 038-330-46, in Trona California.

5. Project sponsor's name and address: Robbie Barker 82740 Trona Rd., Trona, CA 93562

6. General Plan designation: Residential Estate (RE), SEDA overlay

7. Zoning: Rural Residential (RR-5.0)

8. Description of project: The applicant proposes a photovoltaic (PV) solar facility on a five-acre parcel, consisting of approximately 2,300 single-axis tracker solar panels that will produce approximately 1.2 megawatts (MW) of electricity. The five-acre site is graded and highly disturbed, flat or gently sloped, and has no natural vegetation, habitat, water features or structures. The site is approximately 0.3 miles west of Trona Wildrose Road, which is not a designated scenic highway or scenic corridor.

9. Surrounding land uses and setting: The property is surrounded by undeveloped land, sparse residential dwellings, and commercial uses (such as equipment storage). Developed areas include the Trona Airport, scattered residences, and scrap yards. The surrounding parcels are highly disturbed, devoid of plants or native habitat. Weed abatement has been performed throughout the area.

Location:	Use:	Gen. Plan Designation	Zoning
North	Vacant	Residential Estate (RE)	Rural Residential (RR-5.0-MH)
South	Vacant	Residential Estate (RE)	Rural Residential (RR-5.0-MH)
East	Vacant	Residential Estate (RE)	Rural Residential (RR-5.0-MH)
West	Single family residence	Residential Estate (RE)	Rural Residential (RR-5.0-MH)

10. Other public agencies whose approval is required: Inyo County Building and Safety, Inyo County Environmental Health, Inyo County Public Works

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, has consultation begun?

In compliance with AB 52 and Public Resource Code Section 21080.3.1(b), tribes identified as being local to Inyo County were notified via certified letter about the project and the opportunity for consultation on this project. The tribes notified were as follows: The Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe, the Fort Independence Paiute Tribe, the Lone Pine Paiute Tribe, and the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe.

Note: Conducting consultation early in the CEQA process allows tribal governments, lead agencies, and project proponents to discuss the level of environmental review, identify and address potential adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources, and reduce the potential for delay and conflict in the environmental review process. (See Public Resources Code section 21083.3.2.) Information may also be available from the California Native American Heritage Commission's Sacred Lands File per Public Resources Code section 5097.96 and the California Historical Resources Information System administered by the California Office of Historic Preservation. Please also note that Public Resources Code section 21082.3(c) contains provisions specific to confidenthttps://library.qcode.us/lib/inyo_county_ca/pub/county_code/item/title_18-chapter_18_12?view=alliality.

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.

☐ Aesthetics Resources	☐ Agriculture & Forestry	☐ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☐ Geology /Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials
☐ Hydrology/Water Quality	☐ Land Use / Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☐ Noise	☐ Population / Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation	☐ Tribal Cultural Resources
☐ Utilities / Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find 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.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find 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.

☐ I find 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.

Cynthia Draper

Cynthia Draper, Assistant Planner
Inyo County Planning Department

Date July 19-2023

RECIRCULATED INITIAL STUDY with MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

Renewable Energy Permit 2022-01/Barker- Trona 7

REGULATORY BACKGROUND

The Inyo County General Plan provides a vision for Inyo County's long-range physical and economic development, including resource development and conservation. The General Plan contains implementing strategies, policies and programs enabling this vision to be accomplished. On March 24, 2015, the Board of Supervisors adopted an amendment to the General Plan known as the Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment ("REGPA"). The REGPA regulates the type, siting, and size of renewable energy solar development projects in the County through adoption of land use policies consistent with the broader goals in the General Plan.

The REGPA differentiates renewable energy solar facilities based on their size and output. It defines "utility-scale" facilities as those generating at least 20 megawatts (MW) for off-site use, consumption or sale. Facilities that generate less than 20 MW may include "commercial-scale" or "community-scale" facilities, depending on whether electricity is produced for off-site use or for use by a specific community. The REGPA states that the County "shall encourage the development of" commercial and community-scale facilities.

The REGPA also designated seven different areas of the County, known as Solar Energy Development Areas (SEDAs), where renewable energy solar facilities would be allowed. Policy LU-1.17 permits utility-scale and commercial-scale facilities to be considered in SEDAs, subject to any necessary environmental review. Renewable energy solar development within a SEDA is allowed in any zoning classification. The Trona SEDA covers an approximately 7.1-mile area in the Searles Valley, north of the unincorporated community of Trona. The REGPA allows 600 acres of renewable energy development in the Trona SEDA.

When the County adopted the REGPA in 2015, it certified a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The PEIR analyzed the impacts of renewable energy solar development throughout the County. It identified less-than-significant environmental impacts to agriculture and forestry resources, air quality, geology, and soils, GHG emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, socioeconomics, transportation and circulation, and utilities and service systems. The PEIR identified potentially significant and unavoidable impacts to aesthetics, biological resources, and cultural resources, and included mitigation measures to reduce these impacts to the extent feasible.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Inyo County covers approximately 10,200 square miles and is located on the east side of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, within the east-central part of California. The County is primarily rural and undeveloped, characterized by open expanses, wide valleys and mountains ranging from low hills to jagged peaks. Elevations are from 282 feet below sea level within Death Valley National Park to 14,505 feet above sea level (amsl) in the Sierra Nevada

is arid to semi-arid, marked by low precipitation, abundant sunshine, frequent winds, moderate to low humidity, and high evapotranspiration.

The Project is located in the Searles Valley, at the southern edge of the County, north of the unincorporated Trona community, and in the Trona SEDA. As noted above, the SEDA covers approximately 7.1 square miles (4,550 acres). Most of the SEDA is undeveloped. Roughly 60 percent is managed by BLM, with the remainder under private ownership. Developed features include Trona Airport, scattered rural residences, and scrap yards. North of the airport lies Valley Wells, a state historical landmark, consisting of small buildings, abandoned recreational facilities, a desert golf course and well field. The Trona area is sparsely populated, containing less than 2,000 people.

Elevations within the Trona SEDA range from 2,100 feet to 1,650 feet amsl. The average January temperatures range from 32-58 degrees Fahrenheit, and in July from 73-105 degrees. Annual precipitation is low, averaging 3.98 inches. The habitat consists mainly of alkali desert scrub flats with ephemeral washes, with an open composition and canopy cover less than 50 percent.

Topography in the Trona SEDA, within the center of the northern Searles Valley, is generally level or gently sloped. Steeper terrain occurs to the west (the Argus Range), east, and north (the Slate Range). Surface exposures consist predominantly of late Quaternary alluvial/lake deposits, sandy to loamy topsoil with Mesozoic granitic intrusive rocks to the west, and areas to the east and north exhibiting an assemblage of Precambrian/Paleozoic metasediments, Mesozoic granitic intrusives, Mesozoic and Tertiary volcanics, and older Quaternary alluvial/sedimentary deposits. No mapped faults exist in the Searles Valley. The nearest mapped fault is the Panamint Fault, approximately 10 miles east.

The Trona SEDA is within the South Lahontan Basin, as designated in the 1995 (as amended) Lahontan RWQCB Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region (Basin Plan). The Trona SEDA is within the areal extent of the Searles Valley Groundwater Basin (Searles Basin), which includes an area of approximately 197,000 acres, and a water-bearing strata consisting of a thick (at least 750 feet) sequence of younger unconsolidated alluvial deposits and underlying (locally semi-consolidated) older alluvium.

Average reported municipal/irrigation well depths in the Searles Basin are approximately 300 feet (DWR 2003). Estimated groundwater storage capacity is 2.1 million acre-feet. Groundwater is characterized mainly as calcium-sodium-bicarbonate or sodium-calcium bicarbonate in nature, with groundwater near Searles Lake described as sodium-chloride in nature. The northwestern and southwestern portions of the Searles Basin exhibit generally good water quality (with locally elevated fluoride and nitrate levels), while areas near Searles Lake have poor water quality with TDS levels of between 12,000 and 420,000 mg/l (DWR 2003).

The Trona SEDA is within the Great Basin Valleys Air Basin (Air Basin). The Air Basin is named for its geological formation of valleys surrounded by mountains. Air rises and sinks due to the heat in the valleys and height of the mountains, which causes the air to settle in the valleys and low-lying areas. Areas in the Air Basin are under the jurisdiction of the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD), which regulates air pollutant emissions for all stationary sources within the Air Basin.

In 1987, the Trona area was designated as a PM-10 nonattainment area by the United States EPA. The main source of PM-10 emissions in the region is the dry Owens Lake lakebed, which is located approximately 50 miles northwest of the Project. At the time, the Trona area was part of the Coso Junction Planning Area. In 2002, the US EPA redesignated the Searles Valley into three separate areas, and made a finding of attainment for Trona. (Federal Register, 2002a, 2002b.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant has applied for two renewable energy permits for two separate photovoltaic (PV) solar facilities on contiguous land ("Project"). The applicant submitted two separate applications because each facility would separately connect to the existing Southern California Edison (SCE) 33-kV transmission line passing through the area. This Initial Study studies the impacts of both applications as one Project because both facilities have a common applicant, are in proximity to each other, and would have similar impacts.

The first application (No. 2022-01), known to the applicant as "Trona 7," proposes a PV solar facility on a five-acre parcel, consisting of approximately 2,300 single-axis tracker solar panels that will produce approximately 1.2 megawatts (MW) of electricity. The five-acre site is graded and highly disturbed, flat or gently sloped, and has no natural vegetation, habitat, water features or structures. The site is approximately 0.3 miles west of Trona Wildrose Road, which is not a designated scenic highway or scenic corridor.

The second application (No. 2022-02), also known as Trona 4, proposes a PV solar facility within a 15-acre parcel that is contiguous (i.e., has a common corner) with the Trona 7 site. The facility would generate 3.0 MW of electricity utilizing approximately 6,000 single-axis tracker solar panels. The site also is previously graded, flat or gently sloped, highly disturbed and has no natural vegetation, habitat, water features or structures. Prior uses include a private dirt track and a junk yard, both recently removed. The site is approximately 0.03 miles west of Trona Wildrose Road.

Both proposed facilities (collectively, the 20-acre "Project Area") are located approximately three miles north of the Trona community and one mile west of the Trona Airport. The elevation of the Project Area is approximately 1,700 feet amsl. It has no history of agricultural use and is not federally managed. According to FEMA, the Project Area is within an Area of Minimal Flood Hazard.

Zoning in the Project Area is rural residential. Approximately five residential structures are within 0.5 miles of the Project Area, located mostly south and west. Two of these structures are approximately 400 feet from the edge of the Project Area (most of the Project Area is farther to the east and extends up to approximately 2,300 feet distant from these structures). Other land use in 0.5 miles of the Project Area include storage of equipment and vehicles, scrap yards and storage units. Representative photographs are included in Appendix A. Agricultural use of surrounding land is minimal. Agriculture and farming are not significant land uses in the area.

Construction will consist of limited grading in some areas, as the Project Area is already predominantly level and graded. Appendix B (Biological Resources Evaluation) documents the onsite conditions. Shallow trenching will be required for underground conduits, and one 20x20-foot concrete pad will be placed on each site to support the transformers. Following grading and

trenching, metal poles or masts will be installed into the ground to support the solar panels. Grading and trenching will require approximately two days. Pole and panel installation will take an estimated two months. Appendix C contains an equipment list, operating hours and projected air emissions.

Dust control measures will be used at all times during construction, and during Project operations (the control of fugitive dust is critical to solar operations, as panels coated by dust do not function at full capacity). Dust controls during construction will consist of a watering truck, the application of crushed limestone to the ground, and application of a non-toxic clay polymer known as EarthGlue (specifications in Appendix D). Stabilized construction entrance and exits will be used to reduce sediment trackout onto the adjacent public roadway. During operations, limestone and EarthGlue will control dust.

Once installed, the solar panels will reach a maximum height of 12 feet above the ground (or less, as the panels change slightly in height as they rotate slowly throughout the day to track the sun). Panels will feature anti-reflective coatings to reduce daytime glare and reflectivity. Each facility will be fenced to prevent unauthorized access. Representative photographs of the panels and tracker supports are in Appendix E, showing a recently constructed solar project located on adjacent land (described in more detail below) that uses the same equipment design and components to be used by the Project.

The Project is the second renewable energy solar project proposed for the Trona SEDA. The prior project, on 10 acres adjacent to the Project Area, was approved and has been constructed by the applicant (Nos. 2018-01 and 2021-01). Another 10-acre project is reportedly in development to the south. Combined, the existing, proposed and potential future renewable solar projects are 40 acres, and account for a small part of the 600 acres allocated by the REGPA to solar projects in the Trona SEDA. Future solar projects in the Trona SEDA may not be possible, however, according to the applicant, until SCE improves its transmission infrastructure to increase its transmission capacity.

AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public notifications concerning the Project began approximately seven months ago. On November 14, 2022, the County gave public notice of the availability of a Draft Initial Study and Negative Declaration for each of the two applications. The 30-day review period ended on December 17, 2022. No comments were received.

A public hearing was set before the Planning Commission on March 23, 2023 to approve both applications. Two days before the hearing, the County received public comments from a nearby landowner, and as a result, the County postponed the hearing to May 3, 2023. Prior to the May hearing, the County received additional public comments. As a result, the County postponed the hearing again, revised the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, and has recirculated the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration pursuant to Section 15073.5 of the CEQA Guidelines.

TRIBAL OUTREACH

In accordance with AB 52 and Public Resource Code Section 21081.3.1(b) tribes identified as being local to Inyo County were notified via certified letter about the project and the opportunity for consultation on this project. The tribes were notified as follows: The Cabazon Band of

Mission Indians, the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians, the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, the Big Pine Paiute Tribe, the Fort Independence Paiute Tribe, the Lone Pine Paiute Tribe, and the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe.

TIERED DOCUMENT

A program EIR evaluates the environmental consequences of a series of actions that together constitute a large project and share common geographic, regulatory and environmental attributes. (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 14, § 15168(a).) If the program EIR facilitates the approval of activities within a program, the agency must scrutinize those activities, as they arise for approval, to determine if additional environmental review is needed.

An agency's assessment of the adequacy of a prior program EIR for the approval of specific activities involves an analysis of whether the activity falls within the scope of the prior EIR and whether the activity will give rise to environmental impacts that were not previously analyzed in the program EIR. (Cal. Code of Regs., tit. 14, § 15168(c).) If impacts were adequately assessed, the agency can avoid further environmental documentation. (Id., tit. 14, § 15168(c).) If further review is needed, the "tiered" document should analyze only those effects that may be significant but were not analyzed in the program EIR, or that were considered significant but can be mitigated or avoided through further analysis. (Id., tit. 14, § 15152(d); see also Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21081(a)(1), 21094(c).)

The PEIR was a program EIR pursuant to section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines. The County has determined that certain of the Project's potential impacts are adequately addressed in the PEIR. Others require site-specific analysis and are properly assessed in a Mitigated Negative Declaration that will integrate enforceable mitigation measures from the PEIR to ensure that they are enforced at the Project level. The County is treating the Mitigated Negative Declaration as a tiered document under the PEIR. The PEIR can be found at the following website link, or by typing or pasting the following text into an internet browser:

https://www.inyocounty.us/sites/default/files/2023-04/Final%20PEIR%20Volme%20II.pdf

CHECKLIST

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. AESTHETICS – Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project is not located near a scenic vista.
The Project is near the valley floor within an area that is visually characterized by junk yards, and outdoor storage of vehicles and equipment in a high desert environment. The Project is within the Trona SEDA, which has its location and boundaries in an area that lacks an abundance of scenic resources. (PEIR, 4.1-15.)

The Project is consistent with the PEIR analysis and mitigation measures. The potentially-applicable mitigation measures (AES-1 through 6, and 9) require that site-specific visual studies be prepared for utility-scale projects (i.e., generating greater than 20 MW) and for smaller-scale projects determined by a qualified county planner to have a potential to impact visual resources in individual SEDAs. Here, the Project involves a small, commercial-scale facilities that, due to its size and location, have been determined by a qualified planner to not have a potential to impact visual resources, including a scenic vista.
https://www.inyocounty.us/sites/default/files/2023-04/Final%20PEIR%20Volme%20II.pdf

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project Area has previously been disturbed with roads, storage units, and weed abatement. It has previously been graded and is devoid of natural resources such as rock outcroppings and trees. No removal of vegetative life, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings within a scenic state highway will occur. It is not located within or adjacent to any designated scenic highways mapped by the California Department of Transportation. The Project involves the placement of PV solar panels that reach a maximum height of 12 feet.

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 a publicly-accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project will not affect the overall scenic integrity of the area. The Project Area is barren of natural resources that provide scenic value. The Project is in a rural, non-urbanized area and surrounded by property owners that frequently use the area for storage and scrap yards. Public views are mainly from Trona-Wildrose Road, and the Project will not substantially

degrade the existing visual character of the area from the perspective of passing motorists as the area is characterized by scrap yards and outdoor storage of materials. (Appendix A.) The low height of the panels (12 foot maximum, comparable to a single-story house) would not obstruct views of the Argus range to the west or the Slate range to the east.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. Due to the small size of the facilities, and their location and design, the Project will not significantly impact daytime or nighttime views. Construction will take place during the daytime hours only. Operation will not involve new light sources that affect nighttime views. The Project will use solar panels that integrate anti-reflective technology to minimize daytime glare, which is consistent with PEIR Mitigation Measure AES-6 (requiring that certain projects treat solar panels with anti-reflective coating). The boundaries and locations of SEDAs, including the Trona SEDA, were sited in areas without an abundance of scenic resources. (PEIR, 4.1-15.)

* * *

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES: 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 Dept. 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:

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 (FMMP) of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not located on land designated as farmland.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not located on land zoned exclusively for agriculture. Inyo County has no Williamson Act contracts.

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))?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project Area does not include forest land or timberland, or land zoned for forest land, timberland, or Timberland Production.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not located on forest land.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not located on farmland and is not conducive to future use as farmland. The Project Area has no history of agricultural production. To the extent that agricultural activities may exist on surrounding properties, the Project would have no impact on or interference with those activities.

* * *

III. AIR QUALITY: Where available, the significant criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. There is no applicable air quality plan for the area in which the Project is proposed. The Project is in an area considered to be in attainment for PM-10 in reference to National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The predominant air quality concern is windblown dust. The applicant will control dust during construction by standard techniques that include use of a water truck to wet down disturbed areas, the use of limestone to stabilize the ground surface, and application of dust suppressants including EarthGlue, which will ensure there are no significant impacts. (See Appendix C, Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Memorandum). The applicant will be conditioned to obtain any required permits, and follow best management practices, required by the GBUAPCD.

Additionally, the Project is consistent with the PEIR analysis and mitigation measures. The GBUAPCD considers short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions to be less than significant. (See PEIR, p. 4.3-10.) The potentially-applicable air quality mitigation measures (AQS-1 through 3) applied to utility-scale projects of greater than 20 MW and did not apply to

smaller, commercial-scale projects unless determined to be needed on a case-by-case basis by a qualified County planner. Here, the Project involves a small commercial-scale facility that does not present significant air quality impacts. (See Appendix C.) Due to the size, location, low emissions well below all applicable thresholds (Appendix C) and design that incorporates dust controls and suppressants, AQS-1 through 3 are unnecessary to apply.

b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project is located in an area in attainment for PM-10. The Project will be in compliance with air quality standards, as the applicant is conditioned to obtain any required permits and to follow best management practices as set forth by GBUAPCD. The GBUAPCD considers short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions to be less than significant. PEIR, p. 4.3-10.) Project construction and operations will generate emissions that are well below all applicable air quality thresholds and standards. (See Appendix C.)

c) 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 (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☐	☒	☐

The Project is not in an area that is in non-attainment under any applicable standard. The operation of the solar project is not anticipated to result in a substantial increase in vehicular or stationary emissions once installed. As a result, long-term emissions resulting from Project operation are anticipated to be well below all applicable thresholds. (See Appendix C.) The GBUAPCD considers short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions to be less than significant. PEIR, p. 4.3-10.) The Project would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable net increase in non-attainment pollutants during operation, and impacts would be less than significant.

d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the proposed Project will not expose sensitive receptors to any new substantial pollutant concentrations. The construction process is low impact, involving minor leveling and digging of shallow trenches for placing underground conduits, and installation of a single 20'x20' concrete pad for a transformer. There are no nearby schools or hospitals. Few houses are in proximity to the Project Area. During construction, windblown dust will be controlled by watering, the application of limestone, and the application of a dust suppressant. Vehicle emissions will be well below applicable thresholds of significance during construction and operations. (See Appendix C.) During Project operation, the solar facility will not produce pollutants.

e) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☐	☒

The proposed Project will not produce objectionable odors during the life of the operation. The Project will use typical construction techniques and the odors would be typical of most construction sites and temporary in nature.

* * *

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:

Would the project:

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?	☐	☒	☐	☐

No. The Project Area has been inspected by County planning staff and by a qualified biologist. No CDFW or USFWS designated special status species were found in Project Area. The Project Area is graded, cleared of any significant vegetation, and contains no native habitat. No impacts through habitat modification are anticipated.

A Biological Resource Evaluation (BRE) was performed by qualified biologists. (Appendix B.) The BRE surveyed the Project Area and a 250-foot buffer. No significant biological resources (plant or wildlife) were found present in the Project Area or buffer. In particular, the BRE found no evidence of desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizii) or suitable foraging habitat or other habitat for desert tortoise. The BRE also found no evidence of Mohave ground squirrel (Xerospermophilus mohavensis) or associated burrows and noted that the nearest population of Mohave ground squirrel is 8.2 miles southwest, and the nearest core population is 25 miles northwest.

The BRE concluded that the desert kit fox (Vulpes macrotis arsipus) could potentially visit the Project Area as a transient forager, but the Project Area and surroundings lack optimal denning habitat due to existing ground disturbance. The BRE also found a potential for nesting birds or raptors to forage and/or nest in the Project Area or buffer, using utility poles, although no active or inactive nests were observed. Nesting migratory birds and other raptors species, protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Species Act, were not observed but have a potential to occur in or near the Project Area and surrounding areas. (Appendix B.)

To mitigate the potential for impacts to desert kit fox and protected bird species, the BRE recommended Best Management Practices and avoidance measures including: a pre-activity survey, a vehicle speed limit of 20mph, covering of trenches, and proper disposal of food items, as set forth more specifically in the BRE. With these measures, the Project is not expected to significantly impact candidate, sensitive, or special status species.

The Project is consistent with the PEIR. The biological resource mitigation measures identified in the PEIR apply to utility-scale projects with greater than 20 MW of generating capacity. The PEIR provides that "small scale solar energy projects are considered to result in no impacts under CEQA" and the mitigation measures in the PEIR do not apply to such projects unless a qualified County planner determines, on a case-by-case basis, that implementation of the PEIR mitigation measures is necessary. (PEIR, p. 4.4-122-123.) If the planner determines, after review, that a proposed commercial-scale project has a potential to impact biological resources, the PEIR mitigation measures shall be implemented "as determined necessary" by the planner. (PEIR, p. 4.4-123.) Here, the Project has no potential to impact biological resources other than potential impacts to desert kit fox and bird species. The mitigation measures in the BRE will ensure that the potential impacts to desert kit fox and bird species are less than significant, and it is unnecessary to implement any additional mitigation measures from the PEIR.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there is no identified riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community in the Project Area or in close proximity that would be affected by the Project. The USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (USFWS 2014b) shows no freshwater wetlands near the Project Area. No protected natural areas are located within the Trona SEDA.

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federal protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there are no federally protected wetlands in or near the Project Area, nor would the nature of the Project cause fill material or Project contaminants to enter flowing water.

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 native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, although the Project Area could potentially have occurrences of wildlife species, the Project will not interfere with migratory fish or wildlife species. As stated in the BRE, there are no known wildlife movement corridors or habitat linkages that intersect the Project Area. The Project Area is within a highly disturbed area and provides minimal linkage between suitable natural habitats for most wildlife species. The BRE anticipates no substantial movement of wildlife onto or from the Project Area.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there are no local policies or ordinances in place protecting biological resources that pertain to the Project Area.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there are no adopted habitat or conservation plans that affect the Project Area. The proposed Project is within an area specifically designated for solar energy development pursuant to the REGPA.

Mitigation Measures: *The applicant shall implement all Best Management Practices recommended in Section 6 of the BRE (i.e., pre-activity surveys; avoidance buffers for desert kit fox; Worker Environmental Awareness Training Program; speed limit of 20-mph; covering of trenches deeper than two feet at the close of work day; inspection of pipes and culverts greater than four inches before burial; trash and food items onsite must be discarded into closed containers; no pets should be permitted onsite).*

* * *

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5. The Project Area is vacant and undeveloped. It does not contain resources listed in, or determined to be eligible by, the State Historical Resources Commission for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources, or any local register of historical resources. The Project Area also does not contain any known structures, features or sites that may be historically significant.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the Project does not contain any known archaeological resources, and will not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5. Project construction requires limited ground-disturbance on land that is already flat, making the disturbance or discovery of unanticipated cultural, archaeological, or historical resources unlikely.

If any archaeological or cultural resources are inadvertently discovered in the Project Area, work shall immediately desist and County staff shall be immediately notified per Chapter 9.52, Disturbance of Archaeological, Paleontological and Historical Features of the Inyo County Code. The County will then work with the operator and local tribal members, including tribal THPOs, to develop a plan for preservation, protection, or relocation of the resource. With this mitigation measure, the Project will not cause an adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there are no known human remains or burial sites in the Project Area. Additionally, it is unlikely that such remains would be discovered due to the minimal nature of earth-disturbance on the Project site. However, if human remains are uncovered, the discovery would be treated in the same manner as an archeological resource described in (V b) above (i.e., work would cease immediately and remain stopped until a plan was developed for preservation, protection, or removal).

* * *

VI. ENERGY: 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is to construct a PV solar facility, totaling approximately 1.2 MW of generating capacity, that uses only a small amount of energy, and is required to meet California building standards including green and title 24 standards.

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is to construct a PV solar facility, totaling approximately 1.2 MW of generating capacity, located in one of the counties solar energy development areas (SEDAs), as identified by the General Plan. The project will generally advance state and local plans for renewable energy, rather than conflict with or obstruct such plans.

* * *

VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS: Would the project:

a) Expose people or structures to 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.	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not in an Alquist-Priolo zone. The Project operates with little human intervention and would not expose people to significant risk of injury. In addition, the nature of the solar panels, and their low height, does not make them readily susceptible to adverse effects during seismic activity. Also, subsequent to the approval of the permit, the applicant shall work with the Inyo County Department of Building and Safety to ensure any building activities meet State and County Codes.

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the State Geologist has not mapped any faults in the Searles Valley in the vicinity of the Project. In addition, seismic activity and ground shaking can occur anywhere in the region, but compared to much of the rest of California, this is a less than average seismically active area. The California Building Code ensures that structures be constructed to required seismic standards in order to withstand such shaking.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is not within an area of soils known to be subject to liquefaction.

iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project Area is flat or gently sloping, and is not in an area prone to landslides.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, Project construction is limited to trenching for conduits, and minor grading to level the ground surface as needed. The limited scale of ground disturbance is not expected to result in a risk of substantial soil erosion or loss of topsoil, and in addition, the placement of limestone will stabilize the surface to protect against the low risk of erosion.

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 offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the proposed Project is not located in an area with a geologic unit or soil that is known to be unstable. If any questions arise about the quality of the soil during the development of the Project, the applicant shall work with Inyo County's Building and Safety Department to employ the proper design standards that mitigate for expansive soils.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the proposed Project is not located in an area with a known expansive soil type. If any questions arise about the quality of the soil during the development of the Project, the applicant shall work with Inyo County's Building and Safety Department to employ the proper design standards that mitigate for expansive soils.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the soils are compatible with septic tanks and other wastewater disposal systems, although the Project is not designed to have either septic tanks or wastewater disposal systems.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project Area does not include any unique paleontological or geologic features.

* * *

VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. GHGs generated during the construction phase would be minimal and below all applicable thresholds. (See Appendix C.) GHGs during Project operation would be virtually non-existent, and not present a significant impact, because the solar facilities do not generate any GHGs except for occasionally visits (estimated weekly) by the applicant in a light vehicle to monitor the facilities.

The Project is consistent with the PEIR. The PEIR identified mitigation measures applicable mainly to utility-scale projects with greater than 20 MW of generating capacity. The PEIR provides that "small scale solar energy projects are considered to result in no impacts under

CEQA" and the mitigation measures in the PEIR do not apply to such projects unless a qualified County planner determines, on a case-by-case basis, that implementation of the PEIR mitigation measures is necessary. (PEIR, p. 4.7-12.) If the planner determines, after review, that a proposed commercial-scale project has a potential to generate a significant GHG impact, the PEIR mitigation measures shall be implemented "as determined necessary" by the planner. (PEIR, p. 4.7-12.) Here, the Project has no potentially significant GHG impacts, in light of the small scale of the Project and limited GHG emissions that would occur during construction. (Appendix C.)

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the proposed Project will not conflict with any plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. (Appendix C.)

* * *

IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS: Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The proposed Project will produce a small amount of waste associated with operational maintenance activities. PV wastes include broken and rusted metal, defective or malfunctioning modules, electrical materials, empty containers, and other miscellaneous solid materials. These wastes will be generated infrequently. Most of this material will be collected and delivered back to the manufacturer for recycling or disposed of according to legal requirements. The presence of such wastes onsite would not pose a risk to surrounding properties and transporting it off site poses no threat or risk due to the inert nature of the waste materials.

b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The proposed Project will not involve the use of a significant hazardous material. The operation of a PV solar facility does not involve the presence of any liquid wastes or hazardous materials readily capable of migrating to off-site properties. No battery storage will occur on site, or associated hazardous materials, as the solar facilities will connect directly to existing power lines operated by SCE. No significant hazard to the public or environment through a reasonably foreseeable upset or accident that could result in the release of hazardous materials is anticipated.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials,	☐	☐	☐	☒

substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

No. The proposed Project is not within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school, nor will it emit hazardous emissions, nor involve the handling of acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the proposed Project is not located on a site included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code section 65962.5.

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 for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project operates passively and with little human intervention, and there will be no people typically working in the Project Area that could be affected by airport operations. The Project also does not pose a danger to Trona Airport maintenance workers because the airport is not a public use airport. Additionally, the airport is not used with enough frequency to pose a danger to anyone working in the Project Area.

f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the project will not physically interfere with an adopted emergency plan or emergency evacuation plan.

g) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, risk of loss, injury, and death involving wildland fires are not significant from this Project. Fire risks are identified as moderate at the Project Area, and no areas in proximity to it can be considered urbanized. Land surrounding the Project Area are not heavily vegetated and there are only a few residences in the proximity; therefore, the risk of loss, injury, or death involving

wildland fires is less than significant, and any potential risk is further mitigated by compliance with California Building Standards.

* * *

X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY: Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project will not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements. The Project Area is pre-disturbed. The Project Area is in a region characterized by a low level of precipitation. Project construction will involve some trenching and minor grading to level the land, which does not present a significant risk of violating any water quality standards or substantially degrading surface or groundwater quality. The applicant intends to use stabilized construction entrance and exits would be installed at driveways to reduce tracking of sediment onto adjacent public roadways. The Project is subject to regulation by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Inyo County Environmental Health Department and will meet all applicable requirements.

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project will not have any effect on local groundwater. The project will not use local groundwater for its water needs, which are limited to dust control. All groundwater needs will be supplied by mobile trucks supplying water to the job site. Water demands are estimated at 40,000 gallons/week for dust control and site preparation and water will be trucked in from the Searles Domestic Water Company, located in Trona. The Project will not introduce any significant new areas of impervious surfaces that will prevent groundwater recharge.

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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project proposes extremely minimal grading and no new impermeable or impervious surfaces. Other than installing a small concrete pad, no paving or other activities will increase the number of impermeable surfaces that could cause erosion or siltation. No drainage patterns

will be altered. Other than rare storm related overland run-off situations, no water passes over or through the Project Area.

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off-site?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project will not significantly change the landscape or existing runoff patterns or redirect or block flood flows. No drainage patterns or rates of runoff will be altered by the Project.

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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project is proposed in an area that is already disturbed and will have no substantial changes to runoff patterns. No increase in stormwater runoff will occur as a result of the Project.

iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is in an area that is already disturbed and is not located in a flood hazard area.

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is in an area that is already disturbed, and is not located in a flood hazard, seiche or tsunami zone. Note that the BRE identified a potential surface water drainage based on prior mapping but no evidence of any such feature exists onsite and the mapping is therefore considered to be in error or outdated.

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable ground water management plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project will not affect compliance with or implementation of the Lahontan Region water quality control plan and is not in an area included in a sustainable groundwater management plan.

* * *

XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING: Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there is no established community in the vicinity of the Project, and the Project would not physically divide such a community.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is consistent with the current zoning and advances the goals for renewable energy generation for the southern portion of the county, as described in the REGPA. This part of the Trona area also is explicitly called out and designated for solar energy generation as part of the southern Trona SEDA.

* * *

XII. MINERAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project Area has no known mineral resources of value to the region or state. The Project Area is not in a mapped area of regional or statewide significance by the State Mining and Geology Board. Development of the surface for solar generation would not in any event result in the permanent loss of mineral resources unexpectedly in this location.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, there are no known locally important mineral resources delineated in any land use plan that would be affected by the Project.

* * *

XIII. NOISE: Would the project:

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 other applicable standards of other agencies?

All potential noise impacts are within the scope of the PEIR analysis and will be subject to the PEIR mitigation measures. The PEIR evaluated the impacts of construction noise, including the use of construction equipment for grading, trenching, mast installation, installation of concrete footings, movement of heavy equipment and transportation of materials by truck. The PEIR also listed the individual equipment types that would be used to install a solar panel array, and the estimated noise levels associated with each item of equipment. (See PEIR, pp. 4.12-16 – 4.12-18.) The Project would use construction equipment of the types listed in the PEIR, and follow a construction process consistent with, or less impactful than, that anticipated in the PEIR. In this regard, the PEIR focused on utility-scale solar projects. The Project is a smaller, commercial-scale Project that will utilize a construction process that is comparatively light and short term in comparison to utility-scale projects. Trenching and grading will take two days using one grader, one backhoe and a water truck. Panel installation will occur over an estimated two months. No nighttime construction will occur. The Project does not present noise impacts that substantially differ from, or that are more impactful than, those analyzed in the PEIR. As such, the Project is within the scope of the PEIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c)(2).

The PEIR adopted Mitigation Measure MM NOI-2 ("Implement construction noise reduction measures") to ensure that construction noise impacts are avoided or reduced below a level of significance and would have no significant unavoidable adverse impacts. (PEIR, pp. 4.12-18.) The PEIR listed the following five mitigation measures:

> *If utility scale solar development resulting from implementation of the REGPA is proposed within 500 feet of a residence or other noise sensitive receptor, the following measures, in addition to applicable BMPs and related information from REAT's Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual (REAT 2010), shall be implemented to reduce construction noise to the extent feasible:*
>
> - *Whenever feasible, electrical power will be used to run air compressors and similar power tools.*
> - *Equipment staging areas will be located as far as feasible from occupied residences or schools.*
> - *All construction equipment, fixed or mobile, shall be equipped with properly operating and maintained mufflers.*
> - *Stationary equipment shall be placed such that emitted noise is directed away from sensitive noise receptors.*
> - *Stockpiling and vehicle staging areas shall be located as far as practical from occupied dwellings.*

NOI-2 incorporated certain best management practices (BMPs) from REAT's Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual (REAT 2010) for desert renewable energy projects. In regard to potential noise impacts, the manual lists 10 BMPs:

1) *Ensure noisy construction activities (including truck and rail deliveries, pile driving and blasting) are limited to the least noise-sensitive times of day (i.e., weekdays only 45 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.) for projects near residential or recreational areas.*

2) *Consider use of noise barriers such as berms and vegetation to limit ambient noise at plant property lines, especially where sensitive noise receptors may be present.*

3) *Ensure all project equipment has sound-control devices no less effective than those provided on the original equipment. All construction equipment used should be adequately muffled and maintained. Consider use of battery powered forklifts and other facility vehicles.*

4) *Ensure all stationary construction equipment (i.e., compressors and generators) is located as far as practicable from nearby residences.*

5) *If blasting or other noisy activities are required during the construction period, notify nearby residents and the permitting agencies 24 hours in advance.*

6) *Properly maintain mufflers, brakes and all loose items on construction and operation related vehicles to minimize noise and ensure safe operations. Keep truck operations to the quietest operating speeds. Advise about downshifting and vehicle operations in residential communities to keep truck noise to a minimum.*

7) *Use noise controls on standard construction equipment; shield impact tools. Consider use of flashing lights instead of audible back-up alarms on mobile equipment.*

8) *Install mufflers on air coolers and exhaust stacks of all diesel and gas-driven engines. Equip all emergency pressure relief valves and steam blow-down lines with silencers to limit noise levels.*

9) *Contain facilities within buildings or other types of effective noise enclosures.*

10) *Employ engineering controls, including sound-insulated equipment and control rooms, to reduce the average noise level in normal work areas.*

The western and northwestern edge of the Project Area is approximately 400 feet from two residential structures located westerly of the Project Area. Under CEQA Guidelines section 15168(c)(3), the Project will be subject to MM NOI-2 for the portions of the Project Area within 500 feet of the residential structures.

Once the Project is constructed, operational nose sources will be limited to pad-mounted transformers and tracker array motors. Transformers will be located farther than 500 feet from a residence or other noise-sensitive land use and would not require further analysis under MM NOI-1 in the PEIR. Tracker motors generate low noise levels (see PEIR Table 4.12-4) and are sufficiently far from noise-sensitive land uses to have no potential noise-related impacts and to not require further noise study or mitigation. (See PEIR, p. 4.12-19.) As such, the operational impacts are expected to be less than significant.

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No, the Project involves relatively light ground disturbance with few vehicles. No excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise is expected. Considering the types of equipment that will be used, impacts associated with groundborne noise or vibration would be within the scope of the PEIR and less than significant. (See PEIR p. 4.12-15.)

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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. Trona Airport is not public, nor is it used with frequency, and it is typically used by light aircraft only. The proposed Project will have minimal noise levels due to its nature and will not create excessive noise levels for personnel working near the Project Area. The Project Area is not immediately below any established flight path and persons working at the Project Area would not be exposed to any significant level of aircraft noise.

Mitigation Measures: *All potential impacts are within the scope of the PEIR analysis. The Project will be subject to MM NOI-2 for the portions of the Project Area within 500 feet of residential structures.*

* * *

XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING: Would the project:

a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project is not likely to induce any population growth. The Project Area requires few maintenance personnel and will be monitored mostly remotely from offsite locations. No new residents are expected to result from the Project.

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the proposed Project will not displace existing housing or create a situation where replacement housing will be necessary. No housing currently exists in the Project Area. No existing housing will be removed to construct or operate the Project. The Project will have no effect on the level of housing in the Project Area or on surrounding properties.

* * *

XV. PUBLIC SERVICES: Would the project:

a) 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:				
Fire protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. The Project is not considered to be located in a high-risk area for fire protection. The Project Area has no trees or established vegetation. The San Bernardino Fire Department (which provides fire protection services in the Trona community) was consulted on the Project. No concerns related to the Project Area were given.

Police protection?	☐	☐	☒	☐

No. No new police service will be required because of the Project. Offsite private security measures will mostly be used to monitor the Project Area.

Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, no new students or residents, or associated school services, will be required because of this Project.

Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, no new parks will be required because of the Project.

Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the proposed Project will not create substantial adverse physical impacts associated with a need for any other foreseeable public services.

* * *

XVI. RECREATION: Would the project:

a) 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the proposed Project will not increase the use of existing recreational facilities. It is not anticipated that any portion of this Project will result in a change in the level of service required to provide parks or other recreational facilities.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the proposed Project does not include recreational facilities, nor will it cause a need for an increase in parks or other recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

* * *

XVII. TRANSPORTATION:

a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The connecting road, Trona Wildrose Road, is lightly traveled. The Project will add no more than a few vehicles per day to Trona Wildrose Road during the construction phase, and no regular vehicle traffic during operations. During operations, the solar facilities will be remotely monitored and visited only occasionally (weekly, on average) by a light vehicle for inspection or maintenance. The Project will not result in a significant increase in traffic that is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load or capacity of the existing road system. The Project will not conflict with any existing transit, roadway, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities.

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3(b)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The project will not result in an adverse change with respect to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The Project will not significantly increase passenger vehicle traffic or commuter traffic in the region. Construction related traffic generally will be light. When construction is complete, the Project will be remotely monitored and have maintenance personnel on-site as needed during daytime hours. The Project is not within one-half mile of either an existing major transit stop or high-quality transit corridor. The Project will result in less than significant impacts to this resource.

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The proposed Project will not result in any design features that increase transportation hazards. No changes will occur to public roads, including the Trona Wildrose Road. No curves or dangerous intersections will be added to the existing unpaved access road leading to the Project Area. Automobiles and trucks will be accommodated in the Project Area.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No, the Project is proposed on properties that are directly adjacent to, and accessible from, Trona Wildrose Road and emergency access is and will continue to be available.

* * *

XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

a) 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) 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), or	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project Area undeveloped and cleared of vegetation with no known tribal cultural resources. The proposed Project does not contain a resource eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register for historical resources as defined in Public Resource Code section 5020.1(k). If any archeological or cultural resources are discovered on the site, work shall immediately stop, and Inyo County staff shall be immediately notified per Chapter 9.52 of the Inyo County Code.

ii) 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 Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☐	☐	☒

The Project Area is vacant and undeveloped. It does not contain any resource determined by the County to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of the Public Resource Code section 5024.1 (i.e., is associated with events that made a significant contribution to the state's cultural patterns, is associated with the lives of persons important in our past, embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type or period, or has yielded or may yield information important in prehistory or history).

* * *

XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS: Would the project:

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? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

No. The proposed Project is for the approval of a PV solar facility that will primarily be remotely monitored and involve no continuous human presence. The Project will not result in the construction or relocation of new or expanded utility, wastewater, or other utility service systems. The goal of the Project is to create a sustainable supply of electric power, and it will not increase demand for utilities whatsoever.

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

No impact. During operation, water needs will be no more than 1.0-acre feet per year and will be utilized primarily for panel washing 2-4 times annually. During active construction, light water consumption (relative to other construction uses) will be required for dust suppression. All water needs will be covered via trucking it in from Searles Domestic Water Company, located in Trona. No landscaping water will be required.

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? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

No. The Project would not generate wastewater requiring disposal or contribute to demand for wastewater treatment.

d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of soil infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

No. The Project will not require changes to the current solid waste capacity to accommodate them. Solid waste needs for the project will be minimal. Most of the volume of solid waste (scrap metals, electrical equipment, and proprietary solar array features) will be collected and recycled.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No impact. The Project and any future development will comply with Inyo County's solid waste standards, as required by the Inyo County Department of Environmental Health.

* * *

XX. WILDFIRE:

a) Substantially impact an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. There is not an adopted emergency response or evacuation plan for the area in which the Project is proposed.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project Area is on flat or gently-sloped land. It lacks vegetation and vegetation is sparse in the area, characterized mainly by desert scrub, making wildfire risks moderate to low. There will be no project occupants, and the project area is physically separated from surrounding structures. The proposed Project does little to add to the wildfire risk in the area. The risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires is less than significant at this site, and any potential risk is further mitigated by compliance with California Building Standards.

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel break, 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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project will not cause the need for additional wildfire associated infrastructure.

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?	☐	☐	☐	☒

No. The Project is on already graded and disturbed land. The addition of solar facilities will not create downslope or downstream flooding or landslides.

* * *

XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

a) Does the project have the potential to 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, 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?

☐ ☒ ☐ ☐

No, the Project will not impact or degrade the quality of the environment. The limited impact to resources in the Project Area can be mitigated to less than significant levels. Minimization measures have been written into the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the permits and include: pre-activity surveys; avoidance buffers for desert kit fox; noise control measures subject to MM NOI-2 for the portions of the Project Area within 500 feet of residential structures, dust mitigation measures to control air quality issues, and the monitoring efforts of a representative from local native American tribes in case native artifacts or human remains are uncovered.

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)?

☐ ☐ ☒ ☐

No. The proposed Project does not have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable. The only existing and potentially future projects of note in the vicinity are PV solar projects within the Trona SEDA, but the overall number and size of these projects are likely to be less than analyzed in the PEIR. The Project is the second PV solar project in the SEDA as stated in the Project Description. Future solar projects in the Trona SEDA beyond those existing, proposed or planned, appear to be unlikely without significant improvements to offsite SCE transmission infrastructure.

c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☒

No, the Project has no known environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings either directly or indirectly.