# COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE
## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORM: INITIAL STUDY

**Environmental Assessment (CEQ / EA) Number:** 220013
**Project Case Type (s) and Number(s):** CUP No. 220005
**Lead Agency Name:** County of Riverside Planning Department
**Address:** 4080 Lemon Street 12th Floor, Riverside, CA 92501
**Contact Person:** Evan Langan, AICP, Principal Planner
**Telephone Number:** 951-955-3024
**Applicant's Name:** Global Water Farms
**Applicant's Address:** 77935 Calle Tampico, Suite 101, La Quinta, CA 92253

### I. PROJECT INFORMATION

**Project Description:**

The proposed Project is a 13,484-square-foot water desalination facility (Exhibit 4a-c) on approximately 2.78 acres of vacant, undeveloped land (Exhibit 3). The Project site is part of a 641±-acre parcel (Assessor's Parcel No. 731-170-001), and has no formal address assigned. A map that shows the location and dimensions of the parcel is provided in Exhibit 4a. The Project proposes a pilot desalination plant to assess the feasibility of salt-water desalination for production of distilled water. If it is proven feasible, full-scale development may utilize the entire parcel for desalination. However, the scope of the proposed Project and this IS/MND is limited to the pilot project only on the 2.78±-acre Project site. Any proposed full-scale desalination facility would be considered a separate project and will be required to submit comprehensive plans and CEQA compliance documentation to the County for review and approval.

The applicant proposes to build a pilot water desalination facility with a one-story, 13,484-square-foot building, a walled and covered salt storage area, ground mounted solar panels, a surface parking area with ADA parking stall, and minor concrete pad for a portable restroom, building access and storm water collection/conveyance on the Project site. A retention basin is proposed on the south side of the building. The building includes a 10,540-square-foot brine tank room with insulated recessed cement foundational heating tanks and a 2,944-square-foot mechanical/control room. The Project will also construct two underground water lines, one connecting the building to an existing water well to the east, the other connecting the building to a depressed area to the southwest.

The proposed Project will install a well head and pump at the existing private well to extract water and deliver it via the underground pipeline to the building for desalination. The Project is estimated to extract 567,000 gallons per week from the onsite well, equivalent to 108.7-acre feet per year (AFY). The Project will not result in potable water available for use or sale and will therefore not require State Water Resources Control Board – Division of Drinking Water permits. The Project may require discharge permits from the Board, as discussed under Hydrology, below. At first, the desalinated water will be conveyed to the depression area via the underground pipeline and allowed to percolate back into the ground. After testing and proof of adequate water quality, processed water will be bottled in the building and most likely sold to industry for microchip processing or expanded to other uses. The salt produced by the desalination process will be stored on-site in a 2,500±-square-foot area with 3.5-foot masonry block retaining walls on three sides and tarp cover on top. Due to the low salinity of well water, it is expected that salt will be hauled off-site every two months in a truck with 10-cubic-yard capacity. The salt will be hauled to National Chloride for processing and resale.

The proposed Project is the pilot project that could be followed by a full-scale development of a desalination facility on the southern 65± acres of the parcel. The currently proposed Project is intended to demonstrate feasibility of water desalination for various uses such as supplementing local water

supply from degraded water sources including the Salton Sea. The pilot project could operate for up to five years while research and feasibility is determined. The distilled water produced during the proposed Project operation is not expected to be a potable water supply, but rather may be tested for such purpose to prove the concept and establish feasibility for future development. Should the pilot project not be successful, the County will condition the applicant to start the removal of all above-ground structures and ancillary facilities and equipment, and filling of any sub-terranean tanks used for water storage within 6 months of operations being suspended. The limited area of pad grading proposed would be restored to its native condition.

No plans for the long-term project have been developed, and insufficient information is known of its layout, operations, or functions to allow analysis at this time. Should the long-term project be considered, it would require separate application(s) through the County, and a separate and comprehensive review under CEQA.

Based on consultation with the County, the Project can be construed as a mining use for water and salt. Per the Riverside County Land Use Ordinance, Ordinance No. 348, the Project will need a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the proposed desalination uses in the Controlled Development Areas (W-2) zone.

Construction is expected to last four months; a specific start date is not yet available. Maximum depth of ground disturbance is expected to be about 15 feet for the building and three feet for the underground pipelines. The facility will be in operation from 8am to 5pm daily. The pilot project could operate for up to five years while research and feasibility is determined. Should the pilot project not be successful, the County will condition the applicant to start the removal of all above-ground structures and ancillary facilities and equipment, and filling of any sub-terranean tanks used for water storage within 6 months of operations being suspended. The limited area of pad grading proposed would be restored to its native condition.

Access is proposed via Coachella Canal Road and will be limited to Project staff and periodic haul trucks for salt removal.

Utilities and Service Providers

The Project will not require any dry or wet utility connections. The desalination facility will utilize onsite solar energy and propane gas. A portable restroom will be placed to the northwest of the proposed building, and serviced as needed for employee use. Potable water will not be provided, as employee activities will be limited to monitoring and testing, and drinking water will be brought in by these employees as warranted.

**A. Type of Project:** Site Specific ☒; Countywide ☐; Community ☐; Policy ☐.

**B. Total Project Area:**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Residential Acres:** | **Lots:** | **Units:** | **Projected No. of Residents:** |
| **Commercial Acres:** | **Lots:** | **Sq. Ft. of Bldg. Area:** | **Est. No. of Employees:** |
| **Industrial Acres:** | **Lots:** | **Sq. Ft. of Bldg. Area:** | **Est. No. of Employees:** |
| **Other:** 2.78 acres | | | |

**C. Assessor's Parcel No(s):** 731-170-001

**Street References:** Coachella Canal Road

**D. Section, Township & Range Description or reference/attach a Legal Description:** The Project site is located within the southeast quarter of Section 35, Township 8 South, Range 12 East, San Bernardino Base and Meridian.

**E. Brief description of the existing environmental setting of the project site and its surroundings:**

The Project site is located in the northeast corner of an undeveloped 641± acre parcel (APN 731-170-001) east of the Salton Sea and southwest of the Coachella Canal in unincorporated Riverside County, California (Exhibit 1, 2, and 3). The parcel is vacant, undeveloped land. The Project will occur on approximately 2.78 acres in the northeast corner of the parcel. The area surrounding the Project site is largely undeveloped. The Coachella Canal, a gas pipeline, and associated roads and infrastructure are to the immediate north, hot springs resorts about one mile to the southeast, and residences about one mile to the northwest (Exhibit 3). The unpaved Coachella Canal Road borders the site on the north and is the nearest access road to the site. There is a recently cleared pad on the north side of the site and offsite on both sides of Coachella Canal Road. Construction materials and trailers have been delivered and placed on the pad both on- and off-site for temporary storage only. Upon completion of construction on the Project site, there will be no off-site use or activity.

The Project site is within the boundary of the Dos Palmas Conservation Area, as defined by the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

**F. Other Public Agency Involvement and Required Permits:**

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission: JPR Review (completed)
Regional Water Quality Control Board

## II. APPLICABLE GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING REGULATIONS

**A. General Plan Elements/Policies:**

1. **Land Use:** The Project site has a Foundation Component of Open Space, and is designated Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) in the Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP). The designation is intended to protect privately owned lands while allowing very low intensities of development. In this case, the Project has been found consistent with the land use designation, insofar as the extraction of water from localized wells is consistent with mineral extraction – the purpose of the project is to provide proof of concept that brackish, undrinkable water can be desalinated and purified, and used for domestic water purposes to reduce the demand on existing sources, including the Whitewater River Subbasin and Colorado River imports. The Project proposes a minimum amount of site disturbance to allow the construction of a small structure that will be located on an already disturbed area of the site, close to the only access point, Coachella Canal Road.

2. **Circulation:** The Project will have minimal impact on the circulation system. Access to the site is currently available on Coachella Canal Road, and no additional access points are proposed. There will be two employees on the site on a daily basis to monitor and maintain equipment. Periodic removal of salt and purified water would also occur on an irregular basis.

3. **Multipurpose Open Space:** The Project's goal is to reduce the area's dependence on imported water by providing an alternative: the purification of undrinkable and unusable water for domestic consumption. The pilot program seeks to prove that this is possible through technology proprietary to the applicant. Should the Project be successful, the potential for its use on Salton Sea water or other non-potable water sources would be consistent with the General Plan's goal to reduce dependence on Colorado River water allocations and reductions in water consumption from the Whitewater River Subbasin.

Furthermore, the Project has been found consistent with the conservation objectives of the Dos Palmas Conservation Area of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) by the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission. The Project is consistent with the General Plan policies relating to CVMSHCP consistency. The Project will complete pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls, MBTA species, and sensitive plants prior to construction, to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

4. **Safety:** According to the ECVAP, the Project site is not located within a 100 year flood zone, a fire hazard zone or historic wildfire area, and has a low liquefaction potential and slope instability potential. The Project will disturb only 2.78 acres for a single building and associated support facilities, including two pipes – one for intake of water, and one for release of water to an existing depression that will serve as a retention basin. The building will be built to County seismic standards. The Project does not pose a safety hazard to people or structures.

5. **Noise:** The Project will operate mechanical equipment within an enclosed building. The area currently experiences very low ambient noise levels, and the Project will not substantially increase those noise levels. The small number of employees (2) traveling to and from the site on a daily basis will not result in noise levels in excess of General Plan standards.

6. **Housing:** The Project will result in a pilot program conducted in a single structure where 2 employees will monitor and maintain equipment. The Project will have no impact on housing, as employees are expected to be existing local residents.

7. **Air Quality:** The Project will result in minimal emissions associated with employee vehicle trips and operational emissions. The Project will not exceed General Plan requirements for compliance with local air quality management plans.

8. **Healthy Communities:**

   **a) Environmental Justice Summary:** The Project appears to be on the edge of an Environmental Justice Community. However, the site and lands surrounding the site are within the Dos Palmas Conservation Area, and have a very low potential for development. No residential development occurs within more than 10 miles of the Project site. The Project is a pilot project for a water purification system which could assist disadvantaged communities with limited access to clean water in the future, if the concept is proven to be effective in purifying undrinkable water. It is therefore consistent with the County's goals of supporting and assisting disadvantaged communities in improved services and facilities.

**B. General Plan Area Plan(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan

**C. Foundation Component(s):** Open Space

**D. Land Use Designation(s):** Open Space Rural

**E. Overlay(s), if any:** N/A

**F. Policy Area(s), if any:** N/A

**G. Adjacent and Surrounding:**

1. **General Plan Area Plan(s):** ECVAP

2. **Foundation Component(s):** Open Space

3. **Land Use Designation(s):** Open Space

4. **Overlay(s), if any:** N/A

5. **Policy Area(s), if any:** N/A

**H. Adopted Specific Plan Information**

1. **Name and Number of Specific Plan, if any:** N/A

2. **Specific Plan Planning Area, and Policies, if any:** N/A

**I. Existing Zoning:** Controlled Development Area (W-2)

**J. Proposed Zoning, if any:** N/A

**K. Adjacent and Surrounding Zoning:** W-2

## III. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The environmental factors checked below ( x ) would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" or "Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

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

## IV. DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

| |
|---|
| **A PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/NEGATIVE DECLARATION WAS NOT PREPARED** |
| ☐ 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, described in this document, have been made 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. |

| **A PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/NEGATIVE DECLARATION WAS PREPARED** |
|---|
| ☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, **NO NEW ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED** because (a) all potentially significant effects of the proposed project have been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration pursuant to applicable legal standards, (b) all potentially significant effects of the proposed project have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, (c) the proposed project will not result in any new significant environmental effects not identified in the earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, (d) the proposed project will not substantially increase the severity of the environmental effects identified in the earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, (e) no considerably different mitigation measures have been identified and (f) no mitigation measures found infeasible have become feasible. |
| ☐ I find that although all potentially significant effects have been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration pursuant to applicable legal standards, some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in California Code of Regulations, Section 15162 exist. An **ADDENDUM** to a previously-certified EIR or Negative Declaration has been prepared and will be considered by the approving body or bodies. |
| ☐ I find that at least one of the conditions described in California Code of Regulations, Section 15162 exist, but I further find that only minor additions or changes are necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation; therefore a **SUPPLEMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required that need only contain the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised. |
| ☐ I find that at least one of the following conditions described in California Code of Regulations, Section 15162, exist and **a SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required: (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; (2) Substantial changes have occurred with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any the following:(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;(B) Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR or negative declaration;(C) Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measures or alternatives; or,(D) Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR or negative declaration would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measures or alternatives. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Signature<br>*Evan Langan*<br>Evan Langan, AICP<br>*Principal Planner*<br>Printed Name | Date<br>1/18/23<br><br>For: John Hildebrand<br>*Planning Director* |



# RIVERSIDE COUNTY

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04.08.22

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**Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project**
**Regional Location Map**
**Riverside County, California**

**Exhibit**

**1**


Source: ESRI, 2022

04.08.22

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**Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project**
**Vicinity Map**
**Riverside County, California**

Exhibit
2


Source: Google Earth, 2022

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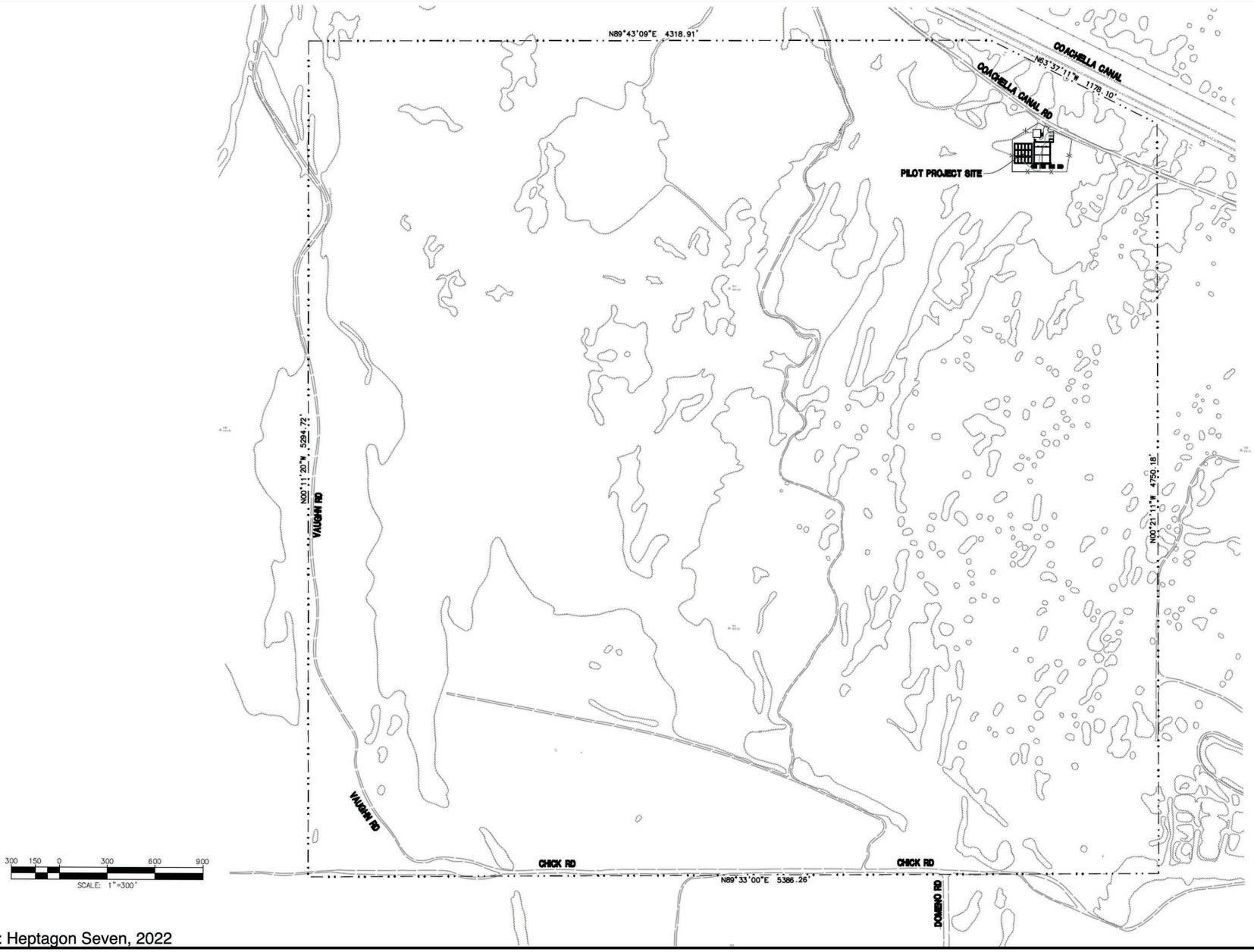
**Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project**
**Project Location Map**
**Riverside County, California**

**Exhibit**

**3**




Source: Heptagon Seven, 2022

04.08.22

Exhibit

4a

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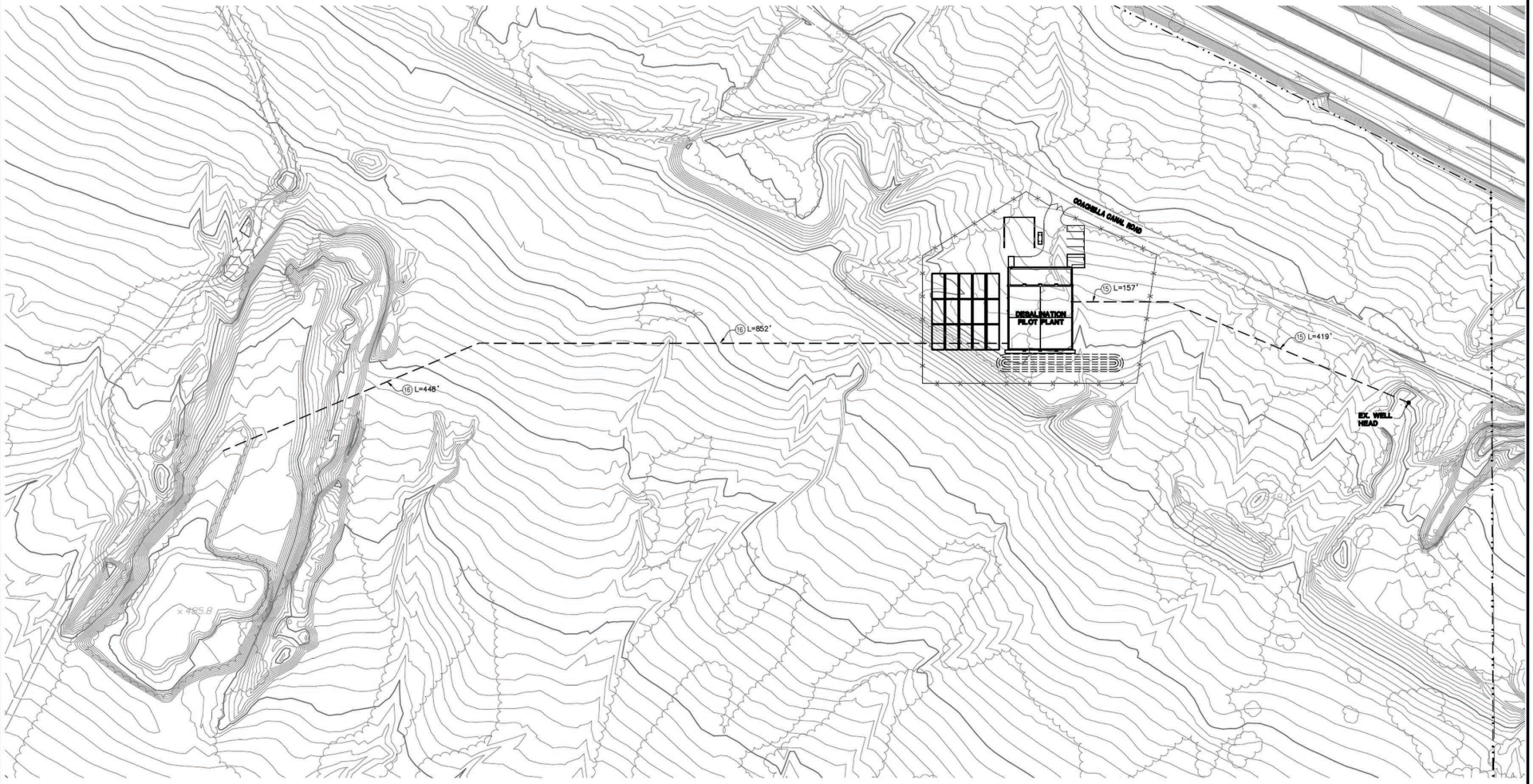
**Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project**
**Project Parcel (APN 731-170-001)**
**Riverside County, California**




## CONSTRUCTION NOTES

⑮ 8" C900 DR-18 PVC WATER PIPE

⑯ 12" HDPE WATER TIGHT PIPE

Source: Heptagon Seven, 2022

04.08.22

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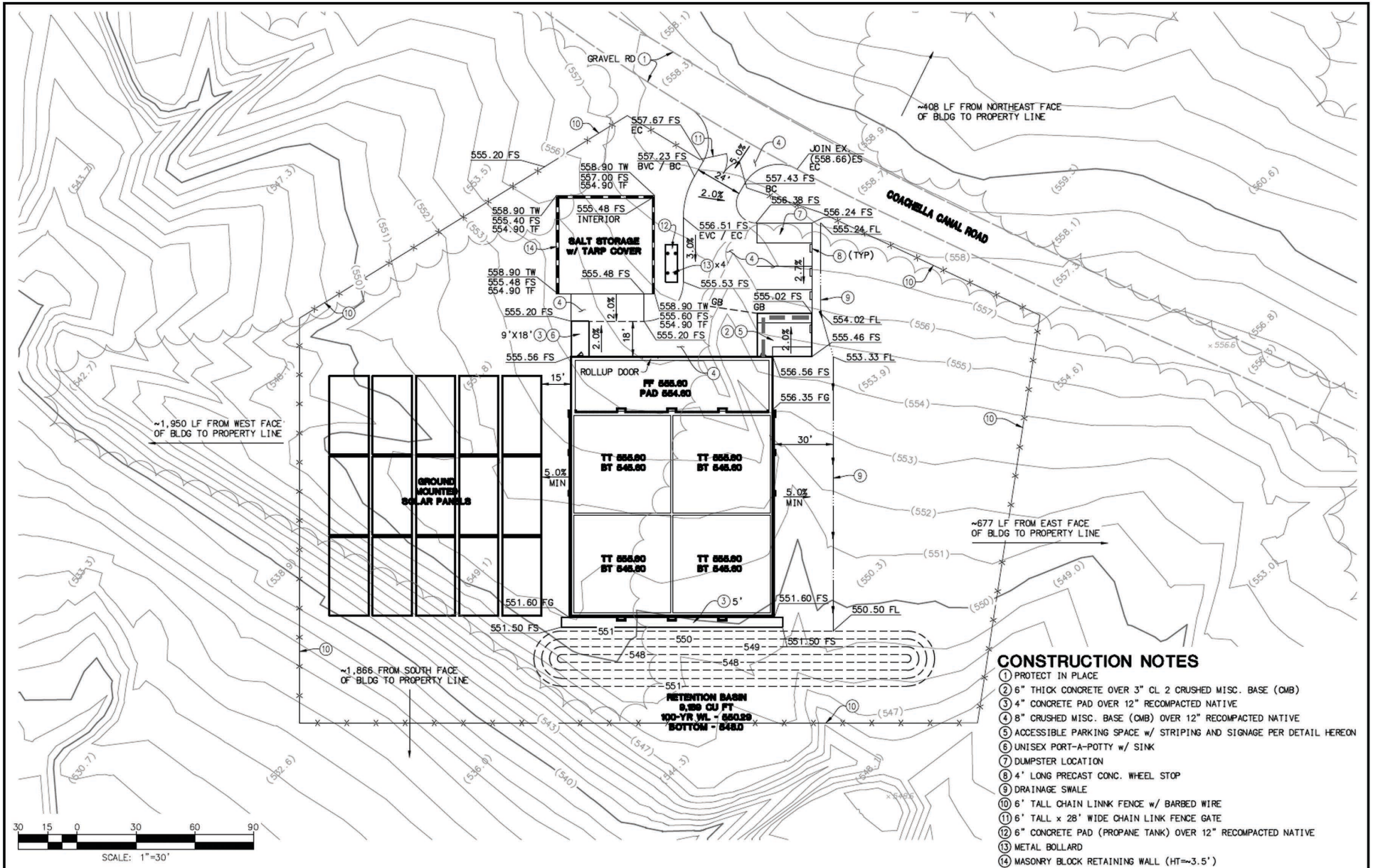
**Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project**
**Project Site Plan Overview**
**Riverside County, California**

**Exhibit**

**4b**




Source: Heptagon Seven, 2022

04.08.22

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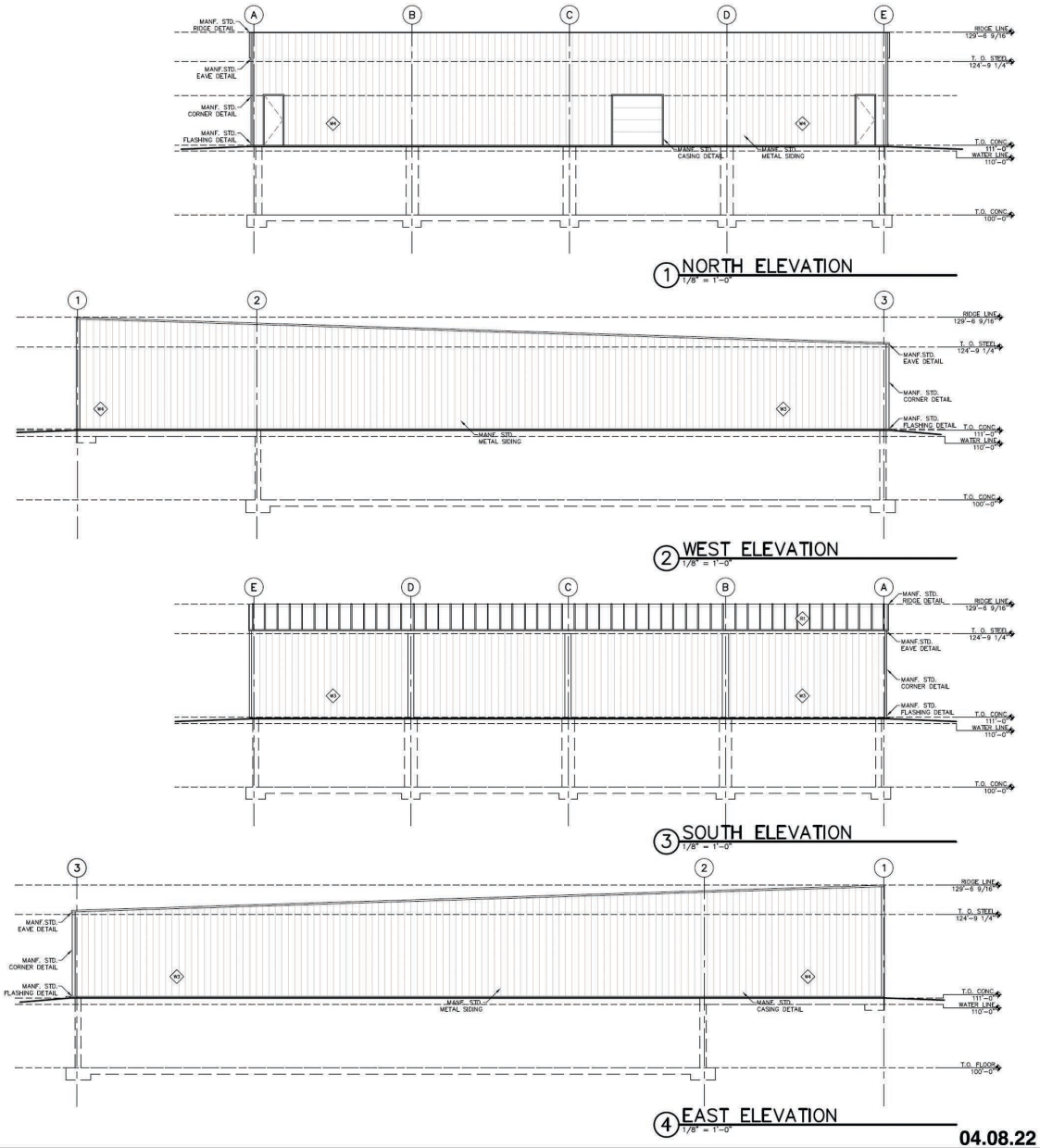
# Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project
## Project Site Plan Focused
## Riverside County, California

Exhibit
**4c**

| | |
|---|---|
| **W1**<br>10" RIGID INSULATION BOARD (TYPE 1) ON<br>WP-1 (WATER PROOFING TYPE 1) ON<br>FOUNDATION PER STR. ON<br>WP-2 (WATER PROOFING TYPE 2) | *(Tank wall below grade)*<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>SECTION 07110 WATERPROOFING<br><br>SECTION 07160 CEMENTITIOUS WATERPROOFING |
| **W2**<br>2" RIGID INSULATION BOARD (TYPE 1) ON<br>WP-1 (WATER PROOFING TYPE 1) ON<br>CONC. FOUNDATION PER STR. | *(Control room wall below grade)*<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>SECTION 07110 WATERPROOFING |
| **W3**<br>STEEL SIDING SYSTEM ON<br>.2" INSULATION BLANKET<br>STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAME<br>INSULATED METAL PANELS | *(Tank wall above grade)*<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARD<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARD<br>SECTION 07411 INSULATED METAL PANELS |
| **W4**<br>STEEL SIDING SYSTEM ON<br>.2 " INSULATION BLANKET ON<br>STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAME | *(Control room wall below grade)*<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARD<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION |
| **R1**<br>STEEL ROOFING SYSTEM ON<br>.2" INSULATION BLANKET (TYPE 2) ON<br>STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAME ON<br>SUSPENDED INSULATED WALL PANELS | *(Tank roof)*<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARD<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARDS<br>SECTION 07411 INSULATED METAL PANELS |
| **R2**<br>STEEL ROOFING SYSTEM ON<br>.2" INSULATION BLANKET (TYPE 2)<br>STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAME | *(Control room roof)*<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARDS<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION |
| **P1**<br>STRUCTURAL STEEL FRAME ON<br>.2 INSULATION BLANKET ON<br>INSULATED METAL PANELS | *(Control room wall)*<br>PER MANUFACTURES STANDARDS<br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>SECTION 07411 INSULATED METAL PANELS |
| **F1**<br>WP-2 (WATER PROOFING TYPE 2) ON<br><br>FLOOR PER STR. ON<br>10" RIGID INSULATION BOARD (TYPE 1) ON<br>COMPACTED STRUCTURAL FILL | *(TANK FLOOR)*<br>SECTION 07160 CEMENTITIOUS WATERPROOFING<br><br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>PER GEOTECHNICAL REPORT |
| **F2**<br>P-1 (PAINT FINISH TYPE 1) ON<br>CONC. FLOOR PER STR. ON<br>2" RIGID INSULATION BOARD (TYPE 1) ON<br>COMPACTED FILL | *(Control Room Floor)*<br>SECTION 09900 PAINTING<br><br>SECTION 07210 INSULATION<br>PER GEOTECHNICAL REPORT |




Source: Global Water Farms, 2022

04.08.22

Exhibit 5

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# Global Water Farms Pilot Desalination Project
## Project Elevations
## Riverside County, California

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ASSESSMENT

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000-21178.1), this Initial Study has been prepared to analyze the proposed project to determine any potential significant impacts upon the environment that would result from construction and implementation of the project. In accordance with California Code of Regulations, Section 15063, this Initial Study is a preliminary analysis prepared by the Lead Agency, the County of Riverside, in consultation with other jurisdictional agencies, to determine whether a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report is required for the proposed project. The purpose of this Initial Study is to inform the decision-makers, affected agencies, and the public of potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed project.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AESTHETICS** Would the project: | | | | |
| **1. Scenic Resources**<br>a) Have a substantial effect upon a scenic highway corridor within which it is located? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and unique or landmark features; obstruct any prominent scenic vista or view open to the public; or result in the creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

Sources: Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Riverside County Ordinance No.348, effective 02/24/2022.

### Setting

The Project site lies in the southern end of the Coachella Valley. The Coachella Valley is flanked by San Bernardino, Santa Rosa, and San Jacinto Mountain Ranges, which rise significantly over the valley floor with elevations of 11,489 feet, 8,716 feet, and 10,834 feet, respectively. The Salton Sea, at an elevation of approximately 240 feet below sea level, is located in the southeast portion of the valley and west of the Project site.

The Project site generally has unobstructed, distant views of the Santa Rosa Mountains, and closer range views of the Chocolate Mountains to the east and the Orocopia Mountains to the northwest (Exhibit 2 and 3). The immediate Project area is rural and primarily undeveloped, except for the Coachella Canal and associated roads and infrastructure to the north and hot springs resorts and residences to the southeast and northwest. The area east of the Project site is planned for low density residential development, and the remaining surrounding area is zoned as Controlled Development Area, which allows a variety of uses such as farming, ranching as well as some institutional and limited commercial uses. Additional uses such as mining, agriculture-related businesses and recreational uses are also allowed with a conditional use permit. The area farther northwest of the

Project is planned for mobile home parks and subdivisions. Future construction in the general Project area is expected to consist of single-story structures in a rural environment, generally consistent with existing residential buildings in size and visual mass.

Middle and foreground views from the Project site include vacant land, desert vegetation, and the Salton Sea. The foothills of the Chocolate Mountains are approximately 0.65 miles northeast of the subject property at the closest point. The Orocopia Mountains are farther to the northwest and may be seen from the Project site depending on the location. The County enforces ordinances to ensure that new development within its jurisdiction does not conflict with any scenic resource programs that may be in place to preserve aesthetic resources.

Ultimate development of the site will result in the construction of a new single-story metal building and associated infrastructure of lower heights on the vacant property. The Project impacts are discussed below.

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The Project site is not located within a state scenic highway or locally designated scenic corridor. Highway 111 from Mecca to Bombay Beach is designated as eligible on the California State Scenic Highway System Map[1] and is at least six miles away from the Project site. As mentioned above, the site is in a rural area with minimal development, and the proposed Project will be similar in building size and scale as potential future development in this area. Therefore, there will be no impact on a state scenic highway.

**b) and c) Less Than Significant Impact.** There are no significant trees, rock outcroppings on unique or landmark features on the Project site.

The subject property is located approximately 0.65 miles southwest of the Chocolate Mountain foothills and farther from the Orocopia, San Bernardino and Santa Rosa Mountains, which are considered scenic vistas for much of the Coachella Valley. From the subject property, scenic views of the Chocolate Mountains are to the north, east, and southeast. Distant views of the Santa Rosa Mountains are to the west and southwest. Distant views of the Orocopia and San Bernardino Mountains are to the northwest. Generally, only middle and upper elevations of the mountains are visible due to topography and intervening vegetation. Apart from the unpaved Coachella Canal Road and Gas Line Road running northeast of the site, the nearest developments are hot spring resorts and residences approximately a mile away to the southeast and northwest. Given the distance of those developments from the site, varied topography, and that both roads are rarely travelled, there are limited views of the project site in the area.

The proposed metal building is just under 20 feet tall (Exhibit 5). The proposed building will be constructed with steel panels and a rollup door on the north side. The building will be surrounded by a retention basin on the south, a ground mounted solar panel field on the west, a salt storage area with 3.5-foot-tall walls on the north and a parking area on the northeast (Exhibit 4). There will be no other aboveground structures on the site. The onsite structures other than the building are well under 20 feet tall. Because Coachella Canal Road and Gas Line Road are rarely travelled primarily by maintenance trucks, the proposed structures of limited size and height are expected to have minimal impact on views of scenic vistas in the Project area.

[1] California State Scenic Highway System Map, California Department of Transportation, https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aacaa, accessed March 25, 2022.

The size and design of the proposed building would not result in significant effects, as the Project size, scale, and design would be consistent with future buildings associated with very low density/intensity uses in the Project area. The Riverside County Land Use Ordinance (Ordinance No.348) Section 15.2 provides development standards in the W-2 zone that limit heights and lot sizes. The proposed building will not exceed the maximum building height (50 feet) and will be designed to the County's standards in Ordinance No.348. Therefore, no impact would occur regarding the visual character and quality of public views in the area as regulated by the County.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2. Mt. Palomar Observatory**<br>a) Interfere with the nighttime use of the Mt. Palomar Observatory, as protected through Riverside County Ordinance No. 655? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** GIS database, Ord. No. 655 (Regulating Light Pollution)

Findings of Fact:

**a) No impact.** The Project is located over 65 miles east of the Mount Palomar Observatory, and is therefore outside both Zone A (up to 15 miles away), and Zone B (15 to 45 miles away). In addition, the Project proposes a single 10,540 SF building on a 2.78 acre site. The Project will include only minimal lighting for safety purposes, and will conform to County standards for outdoor lighting within the Mount Palomar Observatory area. Therefore, the Project will have no impact on the nighttime use of the Observatory.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3. Other Lighting Issues**<br>a) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b) Expose residential property to unacceptable light levels? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** On-site Inspection, Project Application Description

**Setting**

The site is currently undeveloped, adjacent to Coachella Canal Road and near Gas Line Road. The Project proposes the development of 2.78 acres of a 641± acre parcel. One roadway accesses the Project site, Coachella Canal Road. There are no streetlights in the area, only occasional mobile light sources from distant roadways.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** Development of one building with associated infrastructure on the site could create a new long-term source of light or glare from interior and exterior building lighting, safety and security lighting, and vehicles accessing the site. Currently, the nearest human-dwelling development are hot spring resorts and residences approximately a mile away to the southeast and northwest. The Project will generate minimal traffic and require minimal lighting, as deliveries and other operational activities will occur during daytime hours. Because there are no permanent viewers or residents in the immediate Project area, there will be no impact regarding light and glare given the minimal generation of light created by the Project.

CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines
The subject property is located in the Dos Palmas Conservation Area of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). Where a development project is within or adjacent to a conservation area, it is subject to Land Use Adjacency Guidelines to minimize the edge effects of development on the conservation area. Per CVMSHCP Sect. 4.5.3 (Lighting), Project-related "lighting shall be shielded and directed toward the developed area. Landscape shielding or other appropriate methods shall be incorporated in project designs to minimize the effects of lighting adjacent to or within the adjacent conservation area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual." Compliance with Mitigation Measure AES-1 will ensure that Project lighting impacts to the conservation area are less than significant by requiring the implementation of the Plan's lighting requirements.

**b) No Impact.** The Project site is located on 2.78 acres of a 641 vacant parcel. No residential uses occur within several miles of the Project site. The lighting on the Project will be limited to that needed for safety and security, and will comply with County standards. There will be no impact to residential uses from Project lighting.

Mitigation:

AES-1 Project lighting shall comply with CVMSHCP Section 4.5.3/ Lighting shall be shielded and directed toward the developed area. Landscape shielding or other appropriate methods shall be incorporated in project designs to minimize the effects of lighting adjacent to or within the adjacent conservation area.

Monitoring:

AES-A The Planning Department shall review lighting plans to ensure that they meet CVMSHCP requirements prior to the issuance of building permit for the Project site.
**Responsible Party:** Riverside County Planning Department

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AGRICULTURE & FOREST RESOURCES** Would the project: | | | | |
| **4. Agriculture**<br>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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Conflict with existing agricultural zoning, agricultural use or with land subject to a Williamson Act contract or land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Cause development of non-agricultural uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property (Ordinance No. 625 "Right-to-Farm")? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| d) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Sources:** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Riverside County Ordinance No.348, effective 02/24/2022; California Important Farmland Finder, California Department of Conservation, accessed March 25, 2022.

**Setting**

The Project site is located in an area of the County designated for controlled development such as farming, ranching, mining, and other low-intensity rural uses in the County's General Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map. The site is undeveloped and there are no active agricultural lands in the Project area.

Ultimate development of the site will result in the construction of a metal building and associated infrastructure and will not have any impact on agricultural resources, as discussed below.

Findings of Fact:

**a-c) No Impact.** According to the California Important Farmland Finder by the California Department of Conservation, the Project area is considered "Other Land" which includes low density rural developments, natural areas not suitable for livestock grazing, confined agricultural facilities, and vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded by urban development and greater than 40 acres.

The site is not designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance by the California Department of Conservation. According to the Riverside County Land Information Service (Map My County), there is no Agricultural Preserve or land under a Williamson Act contract in the Project area. There are no agricultural lands adjacent to the Project site.

Although agricultural activities are allowed land uses under the County's General Plan in the area, there are no County designated farmlands in the Project vicinity. The Project site is vacant, undeveloped and does not have any farming history. The proposed Project will not result in the direct or indirect conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use, nor conflict with existing zoning or a Williamson Act contract.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5. Forest**<br>a) 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 Govt. Code section 51104(g))? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure OS-3a "Forestry Resources Western Riverside County Parks, Forests, and Recreation Areas," Figure OS-3b "Forestry Resources Eastern Riverside County Parks, Forests, and Recreation Areas," Project Application Materials

**Setting**

The site is not located in an area designated as Forest land in the General Plan. The site is vacant desert land immediately adjacent to the Coachella Canal.

Findings of Fact:

**a-c) No Impact.** The Project site and vicinity do not contain any forested lands and are not zoned for forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned for Timberland Production. Therefore, development of the Project will have no direct or indirect impact on the conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **AIR QUALITY** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6. Air Quality Impacts**<br>a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| c) Expose sensitive receptors, which are located within one (1) mile of the project site, to substantial pollutant concentrations? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; "Final Localized Significance Threshold Methodology," prepared by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Revised, July 2008; "2003 Coachella Valley $PM_{10}$ State Implementation Plan," August 1, 2003; SCAQMD AQMP, 2016; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; Project materials.

**Setting**

The Project site is at the southern end of the Coachella Valley, which is located in the Salton Sea Air Basin (SSAB) and under the jurisdiction of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). All development within the Coachella Valley portion of the SSAB is subject to SCAQMD's 2016 Air Quality Management Plan (2016 AQMP) and the 2003 Coachella Valley $PM_{10}$ State Implementation Plan (2003 CV $PM_{10}$ SIP). SCAQMD operates and maintains regional air quality monitoring stations at numerous locations throughout its jurisdiction. The Project site is located within Source Receptor Area (SRA) 30, which includes monitoring stations in Palm Springs, Indio and Mecca.

Criteria air pollutants are contaminants for which state and federal air quality standards have been established. The subject portion of the SSAB exceeds state and federal standards for fugitive dust ($PM_{10}$) and ozone ($O_3$), and is in attainment for $PM_{2.5,}$ except the City of Calexico. Ambient air quality in the SSAB, including the Project site, does not exceed state and federal standards for carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, lead, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, or vinyl chloride.

Build out of the proposed Project will result in site disturbance during construction, and long-term impacts associated with operation of the Project, as discussed further below. As stated above, the pilot project could operate for up to five years. If decommissioned, no emissions would occur after that time.

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The subject site is located within the Coachella Valley portion of the SSAB and will be subject to SCAQMD's 2016 AQMP and 2003 CV $PM_{10}$ SIP. A project is considered in conformity with adopted air quality plans if it adheres to the requirements of the SCAQMD Rule Book[2], 2016 AQMP, adopted and forthcoming control measures, and is consistent with growth forecasts in the applicable plan(s) (or is directly included in the applicable plan). Conformity with growth forecasts can be established by demonstrating that a project is consistent with the land use plan that was used to generate the growth forecast. A non-conforming project would be one that increases the gross number of dwelling units, increases the number of trips, and/or increases the overall vehicle miles traveled in an affected area relative to the applicable land use plan.

The 2016 AQMP contains a comprehensive list of pollution control strategies directed at reducing emissions and achieving ambient air quality standards. The 2016 AQMP is based, in part, on the land use plans of the jurisdictions in the region, including the County of Riverside General Plan. The proposed Project is consistent with the land use designation established for it in the County's General Plan and will marginally increase the amount of industrial development in the County. The proposed water desalination uses are conditionally permitted in the Controlled Development Areas zone, so it is expected that the proposed Project will result in emissions consistent with those anticipated in the 2016 AQMP.

[2] "South Coast Air Quality Management District Rules and Regulations," adopted February 4, 1977 and as amended. http://www.aqmd.gov/home/rules-compliance/rules/scaqmd-rule-book, accessed March 28, 2022.

Technology improvements and emission reductions associated with more stringent building standards in the 2023 California Building Code (CBC) will further reduce Project-related energy use and air quality emissions. The proposed Project will be subject to rules and guidelines set forth in the AQMP. Therefore, the proposed Project is consistent with the intent of the AQMP and will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan. No impact is anticipated.

**b) Less Than Significant Impact.** A project is considered to have significant impacts if there is a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutants for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard. As previously stated, the SSAB is currently a non-attainment area for $PM_{10}$ and ozone. Therefore, if the project's construction and/or operational emissions exceed SCAQMD thresholds for $PM_{10}$ and ozone precursors, which include carbon monoxide (CO), nitrous oxides ($NO_x$), and volatile/reactive organic compounds/gases (VOC or ROG), then impacts would be cumulatively considerable and significant.

The California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to project air quality emissions that will be generated by the proposed Project (Appendix A). Criteria air pollutants will be released during both the construction and operation phases of the proposed Project, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 summarizes short-term construction-related emissions, and Table 2 summarizes ongoing emissions generated during operation.

Construction Emissions

The Project construction is expected to take up to four months and assumed to start in the winter of 2023. The construction period includes all aspects of Project development, including site preparation, grading, paving, building construction, and application of architectural coatings.

As shown in Table 1, emissions generated by construction activities will not exceed, and are far below, SCAQMD thresholds of significance for criteria air pollutants. The data reflect average daily emissions over the 4-month construction period, including both summer and winter weather conditions. This analysis assumes that materials will balance onsite as provided on the grading plan by the Project engineer. It is important to note that Table 2 depicts the projected unmitigated emissions. Implementation of standard best management practices (BMPs), or minimization measures during construction will further reduce emission levels. Applicable standard requirements and BMPs include, but are not limited to, the implementation of a dust control and management plan in conformance with SCAQMD Rule 403, proper maintenance and limited idling of heavy equipment, phased application of architectural coatings and the use of low-polluting architectural paint and coatings per SCAQMD Rule 1113. Given that criteria pollutant thresholds will not be exceeded, and standard SCAQMD rules, regulations, and BMPs will be applied during construction, impacts will be less than significant.

**Table 1**
**Maximum Daily Construction-Related Emissions Summary**
**(pounds per day)**

| | **CO** | **$NO_x$** | **ROG** | **$SO_2$** | **$PM_{10}$** | **$PM_{2.5}$** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Construction Emissions[1] | 14.94 | 14.54 | 31.54 | 0.03 | 50.60 | 7.30 |
| SCAQMD Thresholds | 550 | 100 | 75 | 150 | 150 | 55 |
| **Exceeds?** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** |

[1] Average of winter and summer emissions, unmitigated, 2023.
Source: CalEEMod model, version 2020.4.0, output tables generated 3.28.2022.

Operational Emissions

Operational emissions are ongoing emissions that will occur over the life of the Project. They include area source emissions, emissions from energy demand (propane for the Project), and mobile source (vehicle) emissions. According to the Project description provided to with application materials, the Project would generate up to eight daily vehicle trips (see Section XVII). Electric power for the project will be generated on-site by a solar array, and no grid-generated power will be required for the Project. Table 2 provides a summary of daily projected emissions during operation of the proposed Project. As shown below, operational emissions are minimal and will not exceed SCAQMD thresholds of significance for any criteria pollutants for operations. Impacts related to operational emissions will be less than significant.

**Table 2**
**Maximum Daily Operation-Related Emissions Summary**
**(pounds per day)**

| | **CO** | **$NO_x$** | **ROG** | **$SO_2$** | **$PM_{10}$** | **$PM_{2.5}$** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Operational Emissions[1] | 2.21 | 0.33 | 0.47 | 0.01 | 24.24 | 2.52 |
| SCAQMD Thresholds | 550 | 100 | 75 | 150 | 150 | 55 |
| **Exceeds?** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** |

[1] Average of winter and summer emissions, unmitigated, 2023.
Source: CalEEMod model, version 2020.4.0, output tables generated 3.28.2022.

Cumulative Contribution: Non-Attainment Criteria Pollutants

A significant impact could occur if the Project would make a considerable cumulative contribution to federal or state non-attainment pollutants. The Coachella Valley portion of the SSAB is classified as a "non-attainment" area for $PM_{10}$ and ozone. Cumulative air quality analysis is evaluated on a regional scale (rather than a neighborhood scale or city scale, for example) given the dispersing nature of pollutant emissions and aggregate impacts from surrounding jurisdictions and air management districts. Any development project or activity resulting in emissions of $PM_{10}$, ozone, or ozone precursors will contribute, to some degree, to regional non-attainment designations of ozone and $PM_{10}$.

The SCAQMD does not currently recommend quantified analyses of construction and/or operational emissions from multiple projects, nor does it provide methodologies or thresholds of significance for assessing the significance of cumulative emissions generated by multiple cumulative projects. However, it is recommended that a project's potential contribution to cumulative impacts should be assessed utilizing the same significance criteria as those for project-specific impacts. Furthermore, SCAQMD states that if an individual development project generates less than significant construction or operational emissions, the project would not generate a cumulatively considerable increase in emissions for those pollutants for which the basin is in nonattainment.

As shown in the tables above, Project-related $PM_{10}$, CO, $NO_x$, and ROG emissions are projected to be well below established SCAQMD thresholds. Emissions will be further reduced through required best management practices including implementation of a dust control plan in accordance with SCAQMD Rule 403. Therefore, the proposed Project will result in incremental, but not cumulatively considerable impacts on regional $PM_{10}$ or ozone levels.

Summary

As shown above, both construction and operation of the proposed Project will result in criteria emissions that are below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation. Overall, impacts related to construction and operation will be less than significant and not cumulatively considerable from a non-attainment standpoint.

**c) Less Than Significant Impact.** The nearest sensitive receptor is a hot spring resort, located at least 0.88 miles southeast of the Project site. To determine if the proposed Project has the potential to generate significant adverse localized air quality impacts, the mass rate Localized Significance Threshold (LST) Look-Up Table was used. The subject site is located within Source Receptor Area 30 (Coachella Valley). Given the Project size and proximity to the sensitive receptor, the 2-acre site tables at 500 meters were used to provide a conservative analysis. Tables 3 and 4 show on-site emissions concentrations for Project construction and operational phases and the associated LST.

**Table 3**
**Localized Significance Thresholds (Unmitigated)**
**Construction Emissions (pounds per day)**

| | **CO** | **$NO_x$** | **$PM_{10}$** | **$PM_{2.5}$** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maximum Emissions | 14.94 | 14.54 | 50.60 | 7.30 |
| LST Threshold | 26,212 | 769 | 223 | 112 |
| **Exceeds?** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** |
| Emission Source: CalEEMod model, version 2020.4.0<br>LST Threshold Source: LST Mass Rate Look-up Table, SCAQMD. | | | | |

**Table 4**
**Localized Significance Thresholds (Unmitigated)**
**Operational Emissions (pounds per day)**

| | **CO** | **$NO_x$** | **$PM_{10}$** | **$PM_{2.5}$** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maximum Emissions[1] | 2.21 | 0.33 | 24.24 | 2.52 |
| LST Threshold | 26,212 | 769 | 97 | 27 |
| **Exceeds?** | **No** | **No** | **No** | **No** |
| Emission Source: CalEEMod model, version 2020.4.0<br>LST Threshold Source: LST Mass Rate Look-up Table, SCAQMD.<br>[1] Operational emissions that affect sensitive receptors are limited to on-site area and energy (propane) emissions for this project. Mobile emissions occur off-site. However, the total maximum emissions are provided here for a conservative analysis. | | | | |

Tables 3 and 4 show that the LSTs will not be exceeded under unmitigated conditions for all criteria pollutants. Therefore, Project impacts to nearby sensitive receptors during construction and operation will be less than significant.

Health Impacts

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, construction and operation of the proposed Project will result in criteria emissions that are well below the SCAQMD significance thresholds, and neither would violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

With current technology, it is not scientifically possible to calculate the degree to which exposure to various levels of criteria pollutant emissions will impact an individual's health. There are several factors that make predicting the Project-specific numerical impact difficult:

- Not all individuals will be affected equally due to medical history. Some may have medical pre-dispositions, and diet and exercise levels tend to vary across a population.
- Due to the dispersing nature of pollutants it is difficult to locate and identify which group of individuals will be impacted, either directly or indirectly.
- There are currently no approved methodologies or studies to base assumptions on, such as baseline health levels or emission level-to-health risk ratios.

Due to the limitations described above, the extent to which the Project poses a health risk is uncertain but unavoidable. It is anticipated that impacts associated with all criteria pollutants will be less than significant overall, and that health effects will also be less than significant.

**d) Less than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will result in a new water desalination facility. Short term odors associated with paving and construction activities could be generated during construction; however, any such odors would be quickly dispersed below detectable levels as distance from the construction site increases. During operation, the Project facility will produce distilled water and salt from well water. The desalination process itself and the energy sources of onsite solar panels and propane gas will not generate objectionable odor. Impacts of odors associated with the proposed Project will be less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7. Wildlife & Vegetation**<br>a) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Conservation Community Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state conservation plan? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any endangered, or threatened species, as listed in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (Sections 670.2 or 670.5) or in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations (Sections 17.11 or 17.12)? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| c) 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 Wildlife or U. S. Wildlife Service? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| e) 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 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| California Department of Fish and Game or U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service? | | | | |
| f) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| g) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; "Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan," 2007; Global Water Farms Pilot Project Part of Assessor's Parcel Number 731-170-001 Biological Resources Assessment & Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Compliance Report, prepared by Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc., March 8, 2022, revised August 15, 2022; CVCC JPR Findings, November 2, 2022.

**Setting**

The subject site is largely vacant and consists of undeveloped natural open space. The project biologist identified dead marsh/wetland vegetation in low lying areas on the site. Desert dry wash woodland, mostly dead or dying, and Sonoran desert scrub in relatively good condition were found in progressively higher areas. There is a recently cleared pad on the northerly site boundary, with construction materials and trailers on the pad both on- and off-site for temporary storage. Upon completion of construction on the Project site, there will be no offsite use or activity. The site is generally surrounded by undeveloped, natural open space, except the Coachella Canal, a gas pipeline, and associated roads and infrastructure to the immediate north. The subject property is in the Coachella Valley, which is under the jurisdiction of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP).

Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions, Inc conducted a Biological Resource Assessment for the proposed development including literature review and field assessment in March 2022. Following review by County staff, the report was updated in August of 2022 (Appendix B). Based on the literature review and field assessment, the proposed Project and surrounding area is located within the CVMSHCP designated Dos Palmas Conservation Area. With a total of approximately 25,380 acres, the Dos Palmas Conservation Area contains core habitat for desert pupfish and crissal thrasher and habitat for 14 other species. Several conserved natural communities occur in this Conservation Area, including mesquite hummocks, Sonoran creosote bush scrub, desert sink scrub, cismontane alkali marsh, desert dry wash woodland, desert fan palm oasis woodland, arrowweed scrub, and mesquite bosque. The Sonoran creosote bush scrub and desert dry wash woodland found on the Project site are not unique to this Conservation Area.

The Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) conducted a Joint Project Review (JPR) for the Project site, to analyze its conformance with the CVMSHCP. Its findings are summarized below.

Ultimate development of the site will result in clearing and grading the 2.78±-acre Project area to accommodate a water desalination facility. Potential impacts on biological resources are discussed below.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant with Mitigation.** The Project is located within a CVMSHCP conservation area and could result in edge effects. Section 4.5 of the CVMSHCP contains guidelines for the prevention of edge effects, as described in Table 5. The guidelines are intended to avoid or minimize indirect effects from development adjacent to or within the conservation areas. Compliance with the guidelines is a standard requirement for any project adjacent to a conservation area. Compliance will ensure that impacts to the conservation area and special status species within its boundaries are less than significant.

**Table 5**
**CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines**

| Requirement per CVMSHCP Section 4.5 | Project Impact |
|---|---|
| Sect. 4.5.1, Drainage: Proposed development adjacent to or within a conservation area shall incorporate plans to ensure the quantity and quality of runoff discharged to the adjacent conservation area is not altered in an adverse way when compared with existing conditions. Stormwater systems shall be designed to prevent the release of toxins, chemicals, petroleum products, exotic plant materials or other elements that might degrade or harm biological resources or ecosystem processes within the adjacent conservation area. | See response to question 23.a (Hydrology) |
| Sect. 4.5.2, Toxics: Land uses proposed adjacent to or within a conservation area that use chemicals or generate bioproducts such as manure that are potentially toxic or may adversely affect wildlife and plant species, habitat, or water quality shall incorporate measures to ensure that application of such chemicals does not result in any discharge to the adjacent conservation area. | See response to question 21.a (Hazards, Hazardous Materials) |
| Sect. 4.5.3, Lighting: For proposed development adjacent to or within a conservation area, lighting shall be shielded and directed toward the developed area. Landscape shielding or other appropriate methods shall be incorporated in project designs to minimize the effects of lighting adjacent to or within the adjacent conservation area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual. | See response to question 3.a (Aesthetics) |
| Sect. 4.5.4, Noise: Proposed development adjacent to or within a conservation area that generates noise in excess of 75 dBA $L_{eq}$ hourly shall incorporate setbacks, berms, or walls, as appropriate, to minimize the effects of noise on the adjacent conservation area in accordance with the guidelines to be included in the Implementation Manual. | See response to question 27.a (Noise) |
| Sect. 4.5.5, Invasives: Invasive, non-native plant species shall not be incorporated in the landscape for land uses adjacent to or within a conservation area. Landscape treatments within or adjacent to a conservation area shall incorporate native plant materials to the maximum extent feasible; recommended native species are listed in CVMSHCP Table 4-112. The plants listed in CVMSHCP Table 4-113 shall not be used within or adjacent to a conservation area. | The Project does not propose any landscaping and has not introduced any invasive plant species. Impacts will be less than significant. |

**Table 5**
**CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines**

| Requirement per CVMSHCP Section 4.5 | Project Impact |
|---|---|
| Sect. 4.5.6, Barriers: Land uses adjacent to or within a conservation area shall incorporate barriers in individual project designs to minimize unauthorized public access, domestic animal predation, illegal trespass, or dumping in a conservation area. Such barriers may include native landscaping, rocks/boulders, fencing, walls and/or signage. | The Project site will be enclosed with a 6-foot tall chain link fence with barbed wire. No dumping, trespassing, or domestic animals will be allowed onsite. No additional mitigation is required. |
| Sect. 4.5.7, Grading/Land Development: Manufactured slopes associated with site development shall not extend into adjacent land in a conservation area. | See response to question 17.a (Geology and Soils) |

According to Section 6.6.1.1 of the CVMSHCP, a Joint Project Review Process (JPR) with the CVCC is required so that CVCC can facilitate and monitor implementation of the CVMSHCP and achieve conservation area objectives. The County applied for JPR review with the CVCC. The CVCC conducted its review and found that the Project complied with the conservation objectives of the CVMSHCP, with the implementation of mitigation measures. The JPR analysis considered both the proposed Project, and the potential disturbance area for the potential implementation of a long-term project, should the proposed Project lead to a permanent project. As described in the Project Description, there are no plans for a long-term project, and application for such a project would require separate application and additional environmental review under CEQA. Please see Appendix C, JPR Review for a complete analysis of CVCC's findings.

The JPR identified one Conservation Objective natural community on the Project site – desert dry wash woodland – and further found that the disturbance area of the Project would have no impact on that natural community. The analysis also found that Other Conserved Habitat for Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel, Le Conte's thrasher, Orocopia sage and Palm Springs pocket mouse is present on the site, but that only Le Conte's thrasher is a Conservation Objective of the Dos Palmas Conservation Area. The Project and the potential long-term project together will disturb 38.25 acres of this habitat. The CVMSHCP allows up to 743 acres of Le Conte's thrasher habitat within the Conservation Area to be disturbed. No other acreage within the Conservation Area has been disturbed to date. Therefore, the CVCC found that the impact to Le Conte's thrasher habitat was consistent with the conservation goals of the Conservation Area, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2, which has been supplemented to include the specific requirements of the CVMSHCP relating to Le Conte's thrasher. As described in Mitigation Measure BIO-2, the Project will be required to conduct on-site pre-construction surveys within 500 feet of the construction area, and to establish a 500 foot construction buffer if the species is identified. This buffer area could not be constructed in until the young have fledged, and the nests have been vacated, thereby eliminating impacts to the species, consistent with the CVMSHCP requirements for Le Conte's thrasher.

The JPR analysis also concluded that the implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 to address impacts to burrowing owls, with the incorporation of CVMSHCP buffer requirements, would satisfy Plan requirements for that species. Mitigation Measure BIO-1 includes the required amendments provided by CVCC, and requires the implementation of CDFW protocols for the survey and protection of burrowing owls, including the provision of buffers if the species is determined to be using a burrow until

the young have fledged. The Mitigation Measure also requires consultation with CDFW and the approval of a relocation plan, should relocation be necessary.

Finally, the JPR determined that the Project would be subject to the Land Use Adjacency Guidelines (see analysis above), and that discharge of treated water should be discussed with the Regional Water Quality Control Board. In order to assure that the Board is consulted, Mitigation Measure HYD-1 is provided in Section 23, below, which requires that the Applicant secure Board approval and/or permitting for discharge of treated water.

Project impacts on any conflict with the CVMSHCP will be less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measures provided below.

**b) and c) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** The Project will result in a water desalination facility with the main building in the center of the site, a pipeline extending east to an existing well for water extraction, and a second pipeline extending west to a depression area for distilled water storage and infiltration. Field assessment by the project biologist identified some old pipe infrastructure on the eastern portion of the site and a dry pond in the depression area at the western end of the site. Aerial photos and history on the Coachella Canal suggest that the pond and potentially other waters/wetlands, including springs associated with the San Andreas Fault, depended on leakage from the canal since the 1950s, but had dried up after the canal was lined with concrete in 2006. No surface water or saturation is apparent, which is evidence of ongoing long-term drought conditions on the site. As evidenced by the dead or dying marsh and desert dry wash woodland vegetation and healthy desert scrub vegetation interspersed throughout the subject site, it is in a transitional state from freshwater marsh and desert dry wash woodland vegetation communities to a desert scrub vegetation community such as Sonoran creosote bush scrub, desert sink scrub, or similar.

The field visit identified eight plant species onsite, of which three were not native and none were classified as being special status. No live annuals were present, and only one species was identifiable from dried remains. Desert Dry Wash Woodland was the only special status vegetation identified on site, which was in poor condition due to lack of water. Thirteen vertebrate wildlife species were observed and/or detected onsite, including one reptile, ten birds, and two mammals. Two of the bird species identified had special status, as discussed below.

The biological study identified 23 special status biological resources that were either observed on the site, had California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) records within an approximate five-mile radius of the site, and/or have potentially suitable habitat on the site. These included six plants, one vegetation community, two fish, one reptile, eight birds, and five mammals. Seven of the 23 special-status biological resources are determined to be absent from the site due to a lack of suitable habitat or being out of the geographical range. Some of the 16 special status resources are covered by the CVMSHCP. The Project location within the CVMSHCP designated Dos Palmas Conservation Area necessitates consultation with the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC), as detailed in subsections e) and f) below. CVCC may also require additional mitigation for certain species, as discussed below.

Five special status plant species have a very low to moderate probability of occurrence onsite: Salton milk-vetch (*Astragalus crotalariae*), sand evening-primrose (*Chylismia arenaria*), Las Animas colubrina (*Colubrina californica*), narrow-leaved sandpaper plant (*Petalonyx linearis*), and Orocopia sage (*Salvia greatae*). Since vegetation communities on the Project site are in a transitional stage, no significant population of any of these species is expected. Further, Orocopia sage is a covered species under the CVMSHCP and therefore does not require further investigation. As a result, the biologist found that no

plant surveys were required and impacts would be less than significant. However, the County's Environmental Programs Division required, in their review of the biological resource study, that Spring plant surveys for the four species not covered by the CVMSHCP be undertaken. As provided in Mitigation Measure BIO-3, below, these surveys will be undertaken in April to capture the blooming period for all four species.

Six special status bird species have a low to moderate probability of occurrence onsite. Among them, prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) could occur as a forager but has no nesting habitat (cliffs) onsite. Therefore, no action is recommended for this species. The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) is covered under the CVMSHCP, but the federal permit for the CVMSHCP does not allow take of this species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). While only marginal habitat is present with limited burrowing opportunities onsite, and since the site is in a conservation area, impacts to the species could be significant, and mitigation is required. As provided in Mitigation Measure BIO-1, below, two pre-construction take avoidance surveys are recommended to ensure that no direct take of burrowing owls occur.

The Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), black-tailed gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), and LeConte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) are all special status species which may nest onsite. Costa's hummingbird and black-tailed gnatcatcher were observed onsite during the field assessment. All four species are protected from take by the MBTA and state code. Nesting bird surveys for compliance with the MBTA and state code will prevent impacts to these species, as provided in Mitigation Measure BIO-2. LeConte's thrasher is covered by the CVMSHCP and the JPR described above provided specific direction for the species, as included in Mitigation Measure BIO-2.

MBTA and state code also protect virtually all native migratory and resident bird species, many of which are known to occur in the Project area. The federal permit for the CVMSHCP also requires avoidance of impacts to nesting migratory and resident birds. To avoid potential impacts, and consistent with the requirements of the MBTA, either avoidance of Project-related disturbance during the nesting season (generally from approximately January 15 to August 31) or nesting bird surveys conducted by a qualified ornithologist or biologist immediately prior to site disturbance are provided in Mitigation Measure BIO-2 to reduce impacts to less than significant levels.

Four special status mammal species have a low to high probability of occurrence onsite: pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*), Palm Springs pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris bangsi*), and Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus*). Pallid bat could forage onsite but does not have suitable roosting habitat (rocky areas), and thus is not expected to be impacted by the Project. The other three are covered by the CVMSHCP, and do not require further mitigation according to the final JPR.

In conclusion, with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3, impacts to endangered, threatened or special status species will be reduced to less than significant levels.

**d) Less Than Significant.** Essential ecological processes in the Project area have been somewhat impacted by the Coachella Canal, which has blocked some of the natural drainage patterns from the Orocopia Mountains to the northwest. The canal has disrupted connectivity with the Orocopia Mountains to some extent. Terrestrial wildlife can only cross the canal freely in siphon areas where the canal runs underground, including Siphon 21 approximately 0.25 miles east of the Project site. The Project is not expected to impact or impede Siphon 21 as a wildlife corridor. As described above in subsection a), the

Project will be required to adhere to CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines, which are intended to avoid or minimize edge effects from development adjacent to or within the conservation areas.

Potential impacts to nesting birds will be mitigated pursuant to the MBTA, if construction or other disturbance occurs in the nesting season, as provided in Mitigation Measure BIO-2. The Project site has not been identified as a native wildlife nursery site. The Project will result in limited scale (about 12% impervious area/coverage on 2.78 acres), low intensity (up to two employees and eight daily vehicle trips) development adjacent to and taking access from the existing Coachella Canal Road. With implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3 and incorporation of CVCC guidance, the proposed development of the site is not expected to interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory species. Impacts will be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

**e) and f) No Impact.** Field assessment by the project biologist identified some old pipe infrastructure on the eastern portion of the site and a dry pond in the depression area at the western end of the site. Aerial photos and history on the Coachella Canal suggest that the pond and potentially other waters/wetlands, including springs associated with the San Andreas Fault, depended on leakage from the canal since the 1950s, but had dried up after the canal was lined with concrete in 2006. No surface water or saturation is apparent, which is evidence of ongoing long-term drought conditions on the site. As evidenced by the dead or dying marsh and desert dry wash woodland vegetation and healthy desert scrub vegetation interspersed throughout the subject site, it is in a transitional state from freshwater marsh and desert dry wash woodland vegetation communities to a desert scrub vegetation community such as Sonoran creosote bush scrub, desert sink scrub, or similar. As a result, there will be no impact on riparian habitat, sensitive natural community, State or federally protected wetlands as a result of the proposed Project.

**g) No Impact.** The County's General Plan contains policies on implementation of the CVMSHCP (ECVAP 16.1) and protection of ridgelines of the Santa Rosa Mountains, Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains. The Project is not in or near any ridgelines and will not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources.

Mitigation:

BIO-1 To mitigate potential impacts to burrowing owl, two pre-construction surveys shall be conducted in accordance with CDFW protocol, as detailed in the "Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation," dated March 7, 2012. In addition, consistent with CVMSHCP requirements, the construction area and adjacent areas within 500 feet of the Development site, or to the edge of the property if less than 500 feet, will be surveyed by an Acceptable Biologist for burrows that could be used by burrowing owl. If a burrow is located, the biologist will determine if an owl is present in the burrow. If the burrow is determined to be occupied, the burrow will be flagged and a 160-foot buffer during the non-breeding season and a 250-foot buffer during the breeding season, or a buffer to the edge of the property boundary if less than 500 feet, will be established around the burrow. The buffer will be staked and flagged. No Development or O&M activities will be permitted within the buffer until the young are no longer dependent on the burrow. Should the biologist determine that relocation of adult bird(s) is necessary, the biologist shall consult with the CDFW and prepare for their approval a relocation plan consistent with the Department's requirements prior to any relocation activities.

The first survey shall occur between 14 and 30 days prior to ground disturbance, and the second shall occur within 24 hours of the initiation of ground disturbance activities.

If no owls are detected during those surveys, ground disturbance may proceed without further consideration of this species, assuming there is no lapse between the surveys and construction, because as the protocol states "time lapses between Project activities trigger subsequent take avoidance surveys including but not limited to a final survey conducted within 24 hours prior to ground disturbance."

BIO-2 For any grading or other site disturbance or tree or vegetation removal occurring during the nesting season between January 15 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct at least one nesting bird survey, and more if deemed necessary by the consulting biologist, immediately prior to initiation of Project-related ground disturbing activities. If an active nest is detected, a buffer would be established around it and no work would be permitted in that area near the nest until young have fledged. While there is no established protocol for nest avoidance, when consulted, the CDFW generally recommends avoidance buffers of about 500 feet for birds-of-prey and listed species, and 300 feet for unlisted songbirds. If ground disturbance occurs outside the nesting season, this requirement shall be waived.

Specifically relating to Le Conte's thrasher, consistent with the requirements of the CVMSHCP, the survey shall be performed using CVMSHCP survey protocols on the construction site and within 500 feet of the construction, or to the property boundary if less than 500 feet. If nesting Le Conte's thrasher are found, a 500-foot buffer, or to the property boundary if less that 500 feet, will be established around the nest site. The buffer will be staked and flagged. No construction will be permitted within the buffer during the breeding season of January 15-June 15 or until the young have fledged.

BIO-3 Prior to ground disturbance, Spring plant surveys for Salton milk-vetch (*Astragalus crotalariae*), sand evening-primrose (*Chylismia arenaria*), Las Animas colubrina (*Colubrina californica*), narrow-leaved sandpaper plant (*Petalonyx linearis*) shall be completed by a qualified biologist following CDFW's *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (CDFW 2018 or most recent version) prior to commencing Project activities. Should any state-listed plant species be present in the Project area, the Project proponent shall obtain an Incidental Take Permit, if required by law, for those species not covered under the CVMSHCP prior to the start of Project activities. The results of the surveys shall be provided in a report to the County Planning Department prior to the issuance of any ground disturbing permit on the property.

Monitoring:

BIO-A Prior to the issuance of any permit to allow ground disturbance on the site, the Project proponent shall furnish the County with pre-construction surveys for burrowing owls and MBTA covered birds, and the results of Spring surveys for plants.
**Responsible Party:** Project Proponent, Project Biologist, County Planning Department, Building Department.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CULTURAL RESOURCES** Would the project: | | | | |
| **8. Historic Resources**<br>a) Alter or destroy a historic site? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Section 15064.5? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** County of Riverside General Plan; Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey Report, Global Water Farms Pilot Project Site, near the community of Bombay Beach, Riverside County, California, prepared by CRM TECH, June 1, 2022.

**Setting**

Historic Resources

Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines generally defines a historic resource as a resource that is: (1) listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register); (2) included in a local register of historical resources (pursuant to Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code); or (3) identified as significant in an historical resources survey (meeting the criteria in Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code).

The valley was first explored by Spaniards traveling through the area in search of a route to Yuma. Established trails were used to travel through the valley, but little settlement occurred in the 1870s, when railroad stations were established, and grew in the 1880s when the Homestead Act and the Desert Land Act opened claims for land. The lower portion of the Salton Basin was once well known for the salt deposits left by ancient Lake Cahuilla, in the area of the Project site. In the last century, the Salton Sea was a recreational and resort center, but increased salinity, pollution and desiccation has significantly impacted the tourism industry.

CRM Tech conducted an historic and archaeological resource study for the project site between February and May of 2022. Their analysis included a records search, Native American consultation and participation, and a field survey. The Torres Martinez participated in the field survey. The results of CRM Tech's investigation are summarized below, and the study is provided in its entirety in Appendix D.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) No Impact.** Research conducted for the Project site found that the area has low sensitivity for historic resources. The nearest human activity in the Project vicinity is the Coachella Canal and its associated roads, which were completed in the 1940s. The area surrounding the Canal was and remains undeveloped. The field survey identified no historic resources within the project site, and no impact is anticipated.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **9. Archaeological Resources**<br>a) Alter or destroy an archaeological site? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource, pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Section 15064.5? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** County of Riverside General Plan; Historical/Archaeological Resources Survey Report, Global Water Farms Pilot Project Site, near the community of Bombay Beach, Riverside County, California, prepared by CRM TECH, June 1, 2022.

**Setting**

Archaeological Resources

Section 15064.5(a)(3)(D) of the State CEQA Guidelines generally defines archaeological resources as any resource that "has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history." Archaeological resources are features, such as tools, utensils, carvings, fabric, building foundations, etc., that document evidence of past human endeavors and that may be historically or culturally important to a significant earlier community.

The Coachella Valley is the traditional home of Native Americans of the Cahuilla Tribe, who lived in three small groups: the Pass Cahuilla of the Beaumont/Banning area; the Mountain Cahuilla of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains; and the Desert Cahuilla of the Coachella Valley. The Cahuilla Indians occupied the region for several centuries, leaving numerous cultural resources. Cultural resources generally include historical, archaeological, and paleontological resources which would reveal ancient civilizations and their way of life.

The valley has been home to Native peoples since at least 8,000 years ago, and likely as long as 12,000 years ago. The Cahuilla, whose societal history was of hunters and gatherers, Prior to European occupation, they numbered between 3,600 and 10,000. The valley's Cahuilla are associated with the Torres Martinez, Cabazon, Augustine, Agua Caliente and Morongo bands.

The Project site occurs within the former shoreline of ancient Lake Cahuilla, which was a significant part of the Cahuilla's life during its repeated filling, including settlements located along the lakeshore. After its last stand in 1700, local tribes moved to rivers and streams to seek food and away from the lakeshore.

CRM Tech conducted an historic and archaeological resource study for the project site between February and May of 2022. Their analysis included a records search, Native American consultation and participation, and a field survey. The Torres Martinez participated in the field survey. The results of CRM Tech's investigation are summarized below, and the study is provided in its entirety in Appendix D.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** The Project site occurs in an area where only two previous surveys have been conducted. These surveys identified five archaeological sites, and one isolate within a half-mile of the Project site, one of which was located a few hundred feet from the Project. Overall, the field survey produced negative results, but was limited by poor ground visibility due to vegetation. As a result, the project archaeologist determined that prehistoric cultural resources could be concealed by vegetation and cannot be ruled out. In order to assure that impacts associated with

archaeological resources remain less than significant, Mitigation Measure CUL-1, provided below, requires that all grubbing, grading, excavation and other ground disturbing activity be monitored by a qualified archaeologist and Tribal Monitor. With implementation of this Mitigation Measure, impacts to archaeological resources will be less than significant.

**c) Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** No cemeteries are reported to occur onsite or in the Project area. It is unlikely that human remains will be uncovered during Project development. However, should human remains be uncovered during grading of the site, Section 7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code requires that all activity stop, and that the coroner be notified to determine the nature of the remains and whether Native American consultation is needed. If the coroner recognizes or has reason to believe the human remains to be those of a Native American, the Native American Heritage Commission will be contacted, and will determine the appropriate Tribal entity determined to be the likely descendants for contact. This requirement, provided in Mitigation Measure CUL-2, assures that impact to cemeteries or human remains will be less than significant.

Mitigation:

CUL-1 Prior to issuance of grading permits, the applicant/developer shall provide evidence to the County of Riverside Planning Department that a County-certified professional archaeologist has been contracted to implement a Cultural Resource Monitoring Program (CRMP). A CRMP shall be developed that addresses the details of all activities and provides procedures that must be followed in order to prevent impacts to undiscovered buried archaeological resources or reduce such impacts to a level that is less than significant. This document shall be provided to the County Archaeologist for review and approval prior to issuance of the grading permit. The CRMP shall contain at a minimum the following:

- **Archaeological Monitor** An adequate number of qualified archaeological monitors shall be onsite to ensure all earth-moving activities are observed for areas being monitored. This includes all grubbing, grading, and trenching onsite and for all offsite improvements. Inspections will vary based on the rate of excavation, the materials excavated, and the presence and abundance of artifacts and features. The frequency and location of inspections will be determined and directed by the Project Archaeologist.
- **Cultural and Tribal Sensitivity Training** The Project Archaeologist and a representative designated by the Tribes shall attend the pre-grading meeting with the contractors to provide Cultural Sensitivity Training for all construction personnel. Training will include a brief review of the cultural sensitivity of the project and the surrounding area; the areas to be avoided during grading activities; what resources could potentially be identified during earthmoving activities; the requirements of the monitoring program; the protocols that apply in the event unanticipated cultural resources are identified, including whom to contact and appropriate avoidance measures until the find(s) can be properly evaluated; and any other appropriate protocols. This is a mandatory training and all construction personnel must attend prior to beginning work on the project site. A sign-in sheet for attendees of this training shall be included in the Phase IV Monitoring Report.
- **Unanticipated Resources** In the event that previously unidentified potentially significant cultural resources are discovered, the Archaeological and/or Tribal Monitor(s) shall have the authority to divert or temporarily halt ground disturbance in the area within 100 feet of the discovery to allow evaluation of potentially significant cultural resources. The Project Archaeologist, in consultation with the Tribal Monitor, shall determine the significance of the discovered resources. The County Archaeologist must concur with the evaluation before construction activities will be allowed to resume in the affected area. Further, before

construction activities are allowed to resume in the affected area, the artifacts shall be recovered and features recorded using professional archaeological methods. The Project Archaeologist shall determine the amount of material to be recovered for an adequate artifact sample for analysis. Isolates and clearly non-significant deposits shall be minimally documented in the field and the monitored grading can proceed.

- **Artifact Disposition** the landowner(s) shall relinquish ownership of all cultural resources that are unearthed in the project area during any ground-disturbing activities, including previous investigations and/or Phase III data recovery.
- **Modification to Monitoring Program** The Project Archaeologist may submit a detailed letter to the County of Riverside during grading requesting a modification to the monitoring program if circumstances are encountered that reduce the need for monitoring.

**Native American Monitoring** Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the applicant/developer shall enter into an agreement with the consulting tribe(s) for a Native American Monitor.

- The Native American Monitor(s) shall be on-site during all initial ground-disturbing activities and excavation of each portion of the project site including clearing, grubbing, tree removals, grading, and trenching. In conjunction with the Archaeological Monitor(s), the Native American Monitor(s) shall have the authority to temporarily divert, redirect, or halt the ground disturbance to allow identification, evaluation, and potential recovery of cultural resources.
- The applicant/developer shall submit a fully executed copy of the agreement to the County Archaeologist to ensure compliance with this condition of approval. Upon verification, the Archaeologist shall clear this condition.
- This agreement shall not modify any condition of approval or mitigation measure.

CUL-2 Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code §7050.5, if human remains are encountered, no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made the necessary findings as to origin. Further, pursuant to PRC §5097.98(b), remains shall be left in place and free from disturbance until a final decision as to the treatment and their disposition has been made. If the Riverside County Coroner determines the remains to be Native American, the NAHC shall be contacted by the Coroner within the period specified by law (24 hours). Subsequently, the NAHC shall identify the "Most Likely Descendant." The Most Likely Descendant shall then make recommendations and engage in consultation with the property owner concerning the treatment of the remains as provided in PRC §5097.98.

Monitoring:

CUL-A The applicant shall provide the County with fully executed agreements with a qualified archaeologist and a Tribal monitor prior to the issuance of any earth moving permit on the property.
**Responsible Party**: Project Proponent, Planning Department.

CUL-B Prior to Grading Permit Final Inspection, a Phase IV Cultural Resources Monitoring Report shall be submitted that complies with the Riverside County Planning Department's requirements for such reports for all ground-disturbing activities associated with this grading permit. The report shall follow the County of Riverside Planning Department Cultural Resources (Archaeological) Investigations Standard Scopes of Work posted on the TLMA website. The report shall include results of any artifact analysis required as well as evidence of the required cultural sensitivity training for the construction staff held during the required pre-grade meeting and evidence that any artifacts have been treated in accordance with procedures stipulated in the CRMP.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Responsible Party**: Project Archaeologist, Planning Department.

| **ENERGY** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **10. Energy Impacts**<br>a) Result in potentially significant environmental impacts due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| b) Conflict with or obstruct a State or Local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan, County of Riverside Climate Action Plan Update, November 2019.

**Setting**

The Project site is in the service areas of Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) and Imperial Irrigation District (IID). The Project site is currently undeveloped and will not require utility connections for the proposed development.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project consists of the construction and operation of a new building and associated infrastructure for water desalination. The proposed building would be built to current Building Code standards, including high efficiency lighting.

During construction, there would be temporary consumption of energy resources for operation of construction equipment and manufacturing of construction materials; however, the duration is limited (anticipated 4 months) due to the small scale of the Project. Compliance with local, state, and federal regulations (e.g., limit engine idling times, require the recycling of construction debris, etc.) would reduce short-term energy demand during Project construction to the extent feasible, and Project construction would not result in a wasteful or inefficient use of energy.

During operation of the desalination facility, the energy demand will be met through onsite concentrated solar panels (around 75%) and a propane boiler (25%). The Project will not be connected to the grid for electricity or require any other utility connection for energy. The Project is estimated to use 1,000 gallons of propane per month during operation. The Project will not include any equipment that does not conform to current emissions standards and related fuel efficiencies. The Project will generate up to eight trips per day (see Section XVII), which will not result in high fuel consumption. Through compliance with applicable requirements, including the California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 6–Energy Efficiency Standards, individual Project elements such as building design and lighting would be consistent with state energy reduction policies and strategies, and would not consume energy resources in a wasteful or inefficient manner. Impacts would be less than significant.

**b) No Impact.** State and local agencies regulate the use and consumption of energy through various methods and programs (e.g., Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32)), California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 6–Energy Efficiency Standards, and the California Code of Regulations Title 24, Part 11– California Green Building Standards (CALGreen). Per the latest CALGreen (2019) requirements for non-

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

residential construction, the Project buildings will be constructed to be ready for zero-net-energy (ZNE) by 2030. As discussed above, the Project is already designed to use primarily (75%) onsite solar energy.

In addition to state laws, the County of Riverside updated its Climate Action Plan in 2019, which sets out a series of goals that are grounded in the principles of environmental soundness and sustainable development through using energy more efficiently, harnessing renewable energy to power buildings, recycling waste, conserving, and recycling water and enhancing access to sustainable transportation modes. The Project is consistent with County policies on renewable energy, as it will generate its energy on-site. No impact would occur because the proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **GEOLOGY AND SOILS** Would the project directly or indirectly: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **11. Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone or County Fault Hazard Zones**<br>a) Be subject to 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Sources: Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

**Setting**

Geology and Soils

The Project occurs in the southern end of the Coachella Valley, which is in the Colorado Desert Physiographic Province also referred to as the Salton Trough. The Salton Trough is as a northwest-southeast trending structural depression extending from the Banning Pass to the Gulf of California, bounded by the San Bernardino Mountains on the north, Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains on the southwest, and Little San Bernardino – Chocolate – Orocopia Mountains on the east.

The Salton Trough is dominated by several northwest trending faults, most notably the San Andreas Fault system. The region is susceptible to a range of geologic hazards, including ground rupture, major ground shaking, liquefaction, slope instability, and collapsible and expansive soils.

In June 2020, a geotechnical investigation was prepared by Sladden Engineering to evaluate geologic and soil conditions on the subject property and develop recommendations for site design and preparation (Appendix E). The results of that analysis are summarized below.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The geotechnical investigation identified that the property is located within a State of California designated earthquake fault zone associated with the Hot Springs fault. Because the Project does not propose any habitable structures on the site, the proposed desalination facility may be considered exempt from fault trenching requirements based on the California Geological Survey Special Publication 42 (revised 2018). The proposed Project is considered feasible on the site, and impacts regarding loss, injury, or death from fault rupture are expected to be less than significant given the Project's limited size and scope (13,484-square-foot building) and potential staffing (up to two employees).

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **12. Liquefaction Potential Zone**<br>a) Be subject to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-3 "Generalized Liquefaction," Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** Liquefaction is the process in which loose, saturated granular soil loses strength as a result of cyclic loading. Generally, liquefaction can occur if three conditions apply: liquefaction-susceptible soil, groundwater within a depth of 50 feet, and strong seismic shaking. As discussed above, the site can be subject to strong ground shaking. Although groundwater was not encountered within the borings conducted by the project geologist to a maximum depth of 51 feet below ground surface (bgs) on the site, historic high and anticipated high groundwater depths were determined to be approximately 5 feet bgs. Potential total seismic settlements were calculated at up to 0.01 inches, and the potential seismically related differential settlements are expected to be less than half of that and negligible. Based upon the general uniformity of the soil and groundwater conditions underlying the site, the maximum differential settlement is expected to occur over a horizontal distance of approximately 100 feet. The Project geotechnical investigation concluded that the Project would be feasible provided that recommendations on foundation area preparation and remedial grading work are incorporated into site design and carried out through Project construction. Impacts regarding liquefaction and other ground failure would be less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

Mitigation:

GEO-1 The Project shall follow and incorporate all recommendations provided in the Project geotechnical investigation pertaining to all aspects of Project design and construction, including but not limited to earthwork and grading, conventional shallow spread footings, slabs-on-grade, on-site pavement design, retaining walls, corrosion series, utility trench backfill, exterior concrete flatwork, and drainage.

Stripping: Areas to be graded should be cleared of vegetation, associated root systems and debris. All areas scheduled to receive fill should be cleared of old fills and any irreducible matter. The unsuitable materials should be removed off-site, or stockpiled for later use in landscape areas. Existing fill soil should be removed and replaced as engineered fill. Voids left by obstructions should be properly backfilled in accordance with the compaction recommendations of this report.

Preparation of Building Areas: In order to achieve firm and uniform foundation bearing conditions, we recommend over-excavation and re-compaction throughout the proposed building areas. All low density near surface soil should be removed to a depth of at least 3 feet below existing grade or 2 feet below the bottom of the footings, whichever is deeper. Remedial grading should extend laterally, a minimum of five feet beyond the building perimeter. The native soil exposed by over-excavation should be scarified, moisture conditioned to over optimum moisture content and compacted to at least 90 percent relative compaction. The previously removed soil may then be replaced as engineered fill as recommended below.

Compaction: Soil to be used as engineered fill should be free of organic material, debris, and other deleterious substances, and should not contain irreducible matter greater than three inches in maximum dimension. All fill materials should be placed in thin lifts, not exceeding six inches in a loose condition. If import fill is required, the material should be of a low to non-expansive nature and should meet the following criteria:
Plastic Index: Less than 12
Liquid Limit: Less than35
Percent Soil Passing #200 Sieve: Between 15% and 35%
Maximum Aggregate Size: 3 inches

The subgrade and all fill should be compacted with acceptable compaction equipment, to at least 90 percent relative compaction. The bottom of the exposed subgrade should be observed by a representative of Sladden Engineering prior to fill placement. Compaction testing should be performed on all lifts in order to ensure proper placement of the fill materials.

Remedial Grading: Over-excavation and re-compaction within the building envelope and extending laterally 5 feet beyond the building limits and to a minimum depth of 3 feet below existing grade or 2 feet below the bottom of the footings, whichever is deeper.

Native /Import Engineered Fill: Place in thin lifts not exceeding 6 inches in a loose condition, at over optimum moisture content and compact to a minimum of 90 percent relative compaction.

Asphalt Concrete Sections: Compact the top 12 inches to at least 95 percent compaction at near optimum moisture content.

Actual depth may vary and should be determined by a representative of Sladden Engineering in the field during construction.

Shrinkage and Subsidence: Volumetric shrinkage of the material that is excavated and replaced as controlled compacted fill should be anticipated. We expect that this shrinkage should be between 10 and 20 percent. Subsidence of the surfaces that are scarified and compacted should

be between 1 tenth and 2 tenths of a foot. This will vary depending upon the type of equipment used, the moisture content of the soil at the time of grading and the actual degree of compaction attained.

Monitoring:

GEO-APrior to issuance of grading permit, the County shall assure that all geotechnical recommendations are included in the Project grading and building plans, as necessary. **Responsible Party:** Riverside County Department of Building and Safety in coordination with the County Geologist.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **13. Ground-shaking Zone**<br>a) Be subject to strong seismic ground shaking? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-4 "Earthquake-Induced Slope Instability Map," and Figures S-13 through S-21 (showing General Ground Shaking Risk), Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** The Project site, like most of southern California, could be subject to moderate to strong ground shaking produced by active or potentially active faults in the region. As discussed above, the Project site is in the Hot Springs fault zone, for which the deterministic magnitude is unpublished. The next closest potentially active fault is the Southern San Andrea Fault located approximately 4.8 miles away with a deterministic magnitude of 8.2 on the Richter scale. Other faults, at greater distances, including Elmore Ranch, San Jacinto, Superstition Hills, Imperial, and Elsinore faults have deterministic magnitudes of 6.7 to 7.875. The Project would result in a new one-story metal building (13,484 square feet) with associated infrastructure for water desalination. Construction of the proposed building will meet the California Building Code (CBC) in effect when building permits are issued. The Project geotechnical investigation provided site specific ground motion parameters, including Site Class D and estimated peak ground acceleration of 0.764g. With implementation of the engineering recommendations and design criteria provided in the geotechnical investigation, and duplicated as Mitigation Measure GEO-1, less than significant impacts are anticipated to the Project regarding ground shaking.

Mitigation: See Section 12

Monitoring: See Section 12

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **14. Landslide Risk**<br>a) 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, collapse, or rockfall hazards? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-5 "Regions Underlain by Steep Slope," Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The site is not susceptible to landslides due to its relatively flat terrain and distance from mountainous slopes. Lateral spreading is a phenomenon associated with liquefaction, which is discussed above in section 12).

CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines
The subject property is in the CVMSHCP Dos Palmas Conservation Area. Where a development project is within or adjacent to a conservation area, it is subject to Land Use Adjacency Guidelines to minimize the edge effects of development on the conservation area. Per CVMSHCP Sect. 4.5.7 (Grading/Land Development), "manufactured slopes associated with site development shall not extend into adjacent land in a conservation area." The Project grading plan is based on maintaining compatible pad elevation with perimeter constraints and balancing the site for earthwork purposes. The Project site consists of relatively flat terrain and no manufactured slopes are proposed. The Project occurs within a large parcel (641± acres) and its grading impacts will be limited to an area of under 3 acres. Impacts to the conservation area will be less than significant.

Mitigation: See Section 12

Monitoring: See Section 12

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **15. Ground Subsidence**<br>a) 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 ground subsidence? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-7 "Documented Subsidence Areas Map," Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** Land subsidence is considered a regional issue in the Coachella Valley due to extensive groundwater pumping. However, no fissures or other surficial evidence of subsidence were observed at or near the subject site. The Project is estimated to extract 567,000 gallons per week from the onsite well, equivalent to 108.7 acre feet per year (AFY).

The subsurface conditions onsite were investigated by excavating three exploratory boreholes to depths between approximately 16 and 51 feet bgs. Laboratory testing and engineering analysis of the soil samples indicated that the ultimate static settlement from the anticipated foundation loads is estimated to be less than 1 inch when using the recommended bearing pressures, using the recommendations included in the geotechnical investigation in foundation design and construction. Remedial grading work is recommended within the proposed building area, including over-excavation and re-compaction of the primary foundation bearing soil to provide uniform foundation support. Impacts will be less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Mitigation: See Section 12

Monitoring: See Section 12

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **16. Other Geologic Hazards**<br>a) Be subject to geologic hazards, such as seiche, mudflow, or volcanic hazard? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The Project site does not occur in proximity to a body of water, and is on flat terrain not subject to mudflow. There are no volcanos within the Coachella Valley. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **17. Slopes**<br>a) Change topography or ground surface relief features? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Create cut or fill slopes greater than 2:1 or higher than 10 feet? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Result in grading that affects or negates subsurface sewage disposal systems? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riv. Co. 800-Scale Slope Maps, Project Application Materials, Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) No Impact.** The Project will occur on flat terrain, with minimal grading. No slopes will be created. According to the Project geotechnical investigation, slope instability in the form of landslides and rock falls was not observed at or near the Project site. The site is situated on relatively flat ground and is not located adjacent to any slopes. No impact would occur.

**c) No Impact.** The Project would utilize a portable restroom from a third-party contractor who will be responsible for proper wastewater disposal at a licensed off-site facility. The Project would not require any other sewer connection, a septic tank or other alternative wastewater disposal system. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **18. Soils** a) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| b) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Section 1803.5.3 of the California Building Code (2019), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| c) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service Soil Surveys, Project Application Materials, Geotechnical Investigation Proposed Desalination Project APN 731-170-001 South of Coachella Canal Road Salton Sea Area Riverside County, California, prepared by Sladden Engineering, June 9, 2020

**Setting**

The Coachella Valley portion of the Salton Trough is covered with primarily terrestrial sediments and some lake and minor marine deposits. The mountains surrounding the valley are composed primarily of Precambrian metamorphic and Mesozoic "granitic" rock. Episodic flooding of major regional drainages, including the Whitewater River/Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel, results in the deposition of sand and gravel on the valley floor. Strong sustained winds emanating from the San Gorgonio Pass cause wind erosion and transport and deposit dry, finely granulated, sandy soils on the central valley floor.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site occurs on the Coachella Valley floor, which is susceptible to high wind erosion. Grading and construction may involve removal of the topsoil; however, Project-related impacts are expected to be less than significant because the Project will be required to implement measures to control fugitive dust (see Air Quality), which will minimize potential adverse impacts associated with wind erosion. No signs of flooding or erosion were observed during the field visit conducted for the Project geotechnical investigation. The Project will be required to implement best management practices required by the County and associated with stormwater flows on the Project site (see Hydrology). These standard requirements assure that erosion resulting from storm flows are controlled on and off site. Overall impacts associated with soil erosion will be less than significant.

**b) Less Than Significant With Mitigation.** During the field investigation, disturbed soil was encountered to depths generally less than one foot bgs within the three bore areas. Immediately underlying the disturbed soil, native alluvial materials were encountered and generally consisted of olive brown silty clay (CL) with minor portions of sand (SW) and clayey silt (ML). Based on the laboratory testing, the near surface soil underlying the site is considered to have a very low expansion potential. However, the underlying clayey soil may have expansive potential, which should be reevaluated during site grading. Impacts are expected to be less than significant with the incorporation of recommendations in the geotechnical investigation duplicated in Mitigation Measure GEO-1.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**c) No Impact.** The Project would utilize a portable restroom from a third-party contractor who will be responsible for proper wastewater disposal at a licensed off-site facility. The Project would not require any other sewer connection, a septic tank or other alternative wastewater disposal system. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: See Section 12

Monitoring: See Section 12

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **19. Wind Erosion and Blowsand from project either on or off site.**<br>a) Be impacted by or result in an increase in wind erosion and blowsand, either on or off site? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-8 "Wind Erosion Susceptibility Map," Ord. No. 460, Article XV & Ord. No. 484

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site occurs on the Coachella Valley floor, which is susceptible to high wind erosion. Grading and construction may involve removal of the topsoil; however, Project-related impacts are expected to be less than significant because the Project will be required to implement measures to control fugitive dust (see Air Quality), which will minimize potential adverse impacts associated with wind erosion. Overall impacts associated with wind erosion will be less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **20. Greenhouse Gas Emissions**<br>a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; County of Riverside Climate Action Plan Update, November 2019; "2003 Coachella Valley $PM_{10}$ State Implementation Plan," August 1, 2003; CalEEMod Version 2020.4.0; Project materials; "Draft Guidance Document – Interim CEQA Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Significance Threshold," prepared by South Coast Air Quality Management District in October 2008.

**Setting**

Certain gases in the earth's atmosphere, known as greenhouse gases (GHGs), play a critical role in determining the earth's surface temperature. Prominent GHGs contributing to the greenhouse effect include $CO_2$, methane ($CH_4$), nitrous oxide ($N_2O$), and fluorinated compounds. GHGs are emitted during

natural and anthropogenic (human-caused) processes. Anthropogenic emissions of these GHGs in excess of natural ambient concentrations are responsible for intensifying the greenhouse effect and have led to a trend of unnatural warming of the earth's climate, known as global climate change or global warming.

State laws such as Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) and Senate Bill 32 (SB 32) require all jurisdictions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. SB 32 is the extension of AB 32 which requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

In addition to state laws, the County of Riverside has adopted its Climate Action Plan in 2015, which was updated in 2019 and demonstrates the County's efforts on GHG reduction strategies, specifically for the target years 2035 and 2050. The Plan sets out a series of goals for the County that are grounded in the principles of environmental soundness and sustainable development through using energy more efficiently, harnessing renewable energy to power buildings, recycling waste, conserving and recycling water and enhancing access to sustainable transportation modes.

Based on the state's adopted AB 32 GHG reduction target, the County, in its 2015 CAP, set a goal to reduce emissions back to 1990 levels by the year 2020. This target was calculated as a 15% decrease from 2008 levels, as recommended in the AB 32 Scoping Plan. To meet SB 32 goals, the County's 2019 CAP update calculated the 2017 County GHG inventories and identified that the County would need to reduce emissions in 2030 by 525,511 MT $CO_2e$ from an Adjusted Business-As-Usual (ABAU) forecast and by 2,982,947 MT $CO_2e$ from an ABAU forecast by 2050.

GHG Thresholds

The County established thresholds for GHG emissions in its Climate Action Plan[3]. In the Plan, projects are considered to have a less than significant impact on GHG emissions if they qualify as a "small project" based on specified criteria provided in the Plan's Appendix D, or by calculating emissions for a project, and determining that it does not exceed the County's threshold of 3,000 tons of $CO_2e$ daily. In order to determine the Project's impacts relating to GHG emissions, these thresholds were analyzed, and the results provided below.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project will result in the construction of a 13,484 water desalination facility whose purpose is to provide research and feasibility for a water purification system. The Project therefore qualifies as a "small project" under the County's Climate Action Plan, insofar as the Plan defines small research and development facilities under Industrial projects, and determined that up to 53,000 square feet could be constructed before the County's threshold would be reached. Since the Project is proposing only 13,484 square feet, it qualifies as a small industrial project.

In addition, in order to assure the most conservative analysis, the Project's emissions were modeled. As described in Section 6, above, the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod) Version 2020.4.0 was used to quantify air quality emission projections, including greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix A).

[3] County of Riverside Climate Action Plan Update, November 2019.

Construction
Construction activities will result in short-term GHG emissions associated with operation of construction equipment, employee commute, material hauling, and ground disturbing activities. As shown in Table 6, the Project is estimated to generate 91.04 metric tons of $CO_2e$ during the 4-month construction period. There are currently no construction related GHG emission thresholds for projects of this nature. To determine if construction emissions will result in a cumulative considerable impact, construction GHG emissions were amortized over a 30-year period and added to annual operational emissions to be compared to applicable GHG thresholds (see Table 6, below).

Operation
At buildout, there are five emission source categories that will be contributing either directly or indirectly to operational GHG emissions, including energy usage, water usage, solid waste disposal, area emissions (pavement and architectural coating off-gassing), and mobile sources. Table 6 provides a summary of the projected short-term construction and annual operational GHG generation associated with buildout of the proposed Project. Based on the County's threshold of 3,000 tons of $CO_2e$ daily, the Project will generate substantially lower emissions than the threshold, will only operate for up to 5 years, and impacts associated with GHG emissions will be less than significant.

**Table 6**
**Projected GHG Emissions Summary (Metric Tons)**

| **Phase** | **$CO_2e$ (MT/YR)** |
|---|---|
| Construction (2023) | |
| Construction Total | 91.04 |
| Operation | |
| Construction: 30-year amortized [1] | 3.03 |
| Annual Operation | 146.81 |
| Total Operation | 149.84 |
| County Threshold | 3,000.00 |
| [1] Buildout construction GHG emissions were amortized over 30-years then added to buildout operational GHG emissions. 91.04/30 = 3.03 | |

Overall, through compliance with SCAQMD regulations, the County's Climate Action Plan and the California Building Code, the Project will be consistent with local and statewide goals and policies aimed at reducing the generation of GHGs. The proposed Project's generation of GHG emissions would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to or conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation for the purposes of reducing GHG emissions. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS** Would the project: | | | | |
| **21. Hazards and Hazardous Materials**<br>a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| c) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or an emergency evacuation plan? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| d) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter (1/4) mile of an existing or proposed school? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| e) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Sources: Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the Northeast Portion of Assessor Parcel No. 731-170-001, An Undeveloped Property Located Approximately 1 Mile Northwest of Hot Mineral Spa Road and System Road, Riverside County, CA 92254, prepared by Terra Nova Planning & Research, Inc., April 2022; Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP) maps, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

**Setting**

Located in the unincorporated Niland area of the Coachella Valley in Riverside County, the Project proposes a new water desalination facility on currently vacant and undeveloped land. The Project will result in a 13,484-square-foot building and associated infrastructure on approximately 2.78 acres. In the County, hazardous materials transport, storage, and use are strictly regulated for large quantity users, such as industrial processes and commercial dry cleaners. The County implements the General Plan Safety Element through regular consultation with the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Fire Department and County Department of Environmental Health. The County implements programs identified in the County's Hazardous Waste Management Plan (CHWMP) and ensure compliance with the CHWMP during new project reviews.

A Project-specific Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was prepared by Terra Nova Planning & Research in April 2022 (Appendix F). The ESA included a detailed literature and database search and review of historical mapping, aerials and other documentation. It also includes a pedestrian survey of the proposed Project site. Results of the Phase I identified the following site history:

- The site has primarily been in an undeveloped and natural state since at least 1940.
- A water retention basin was established adjacent to the site's southwestern portion prior to 1947.
- Part of the site's central portion (existing equipment yard) was leveled and cleared of vegetation prior to 1953.
- A jeep trail was established in the site's western portion between 1975 and 1986.
- No other manmade structures are known or suspected within the site.

Onsite Hazardous Material Sources and Releases
There was no evidence of aboveground or underground storage tanks, clarifiers, sumps, or other potentially hazardous material-containing structures on any portion of the Project site. Potential releases of petroleum hydrocarbons and/or chemicals were also not encountered within the site. Due to the historical absence of agricultural activities, pesticides are not suspected in the surficial soils that cover the site.

Regional Hazardous Material Releases
There is a relatively low likelihood that contaminants from offsite properties have migrated to the subject site and have impacted the underlying soil and/or groundwater.

Recognized Environmental Conditions (REC)
No RECs or historical RECs were identified within the Project site. No Other Environmental Condition (OEC) was encountered within the Project site.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will result in the development of a water desalination facility with a one-story, 13,484-square-foot building, a walled and covered salt storage area, ground mounted solar panels, a surface parking area, and minor concrete pads for the portable restroom, ADA parking stall, building access and storm water collection/conveyance. The proposed Project will produce distilled water and salt from well water extracted onsite and does not require additional chemicals or hazardous materials. In addition to onsite solar panels, the Project will utilize a high efficiency propane gas fired boiler during operation. Propane will be stored in an approved tank storage supplied by an industry vendor, and the tank will be located approximately 38 feet north of the building adjacent to the site access. No significant impact is expected during Project operation regarding the use, transport, release, or disposal of hazardous materials.

Construction of the Project will involve the use of excavation, hauling and other construction equipment and vehicles which will require limited quantities of oil, fuel, and other potentially flammable or toxic substances. Minor maintenance and/or repair of equipment may be required onsite and could result in fuel or oil spills if not properly managed. During construction, contractors will be required to use approved staging areas for storing material and equipment and implement best management practices to assure that any spills are captured, limited and immediately and properly remediated. The Project contractor will be required to adhere to applicable local, state, and federal laws on occupational safety and disposal of hazardous materials. Any Project impacts will be temporary and less than significant, and no adverse long-term impacts associated with hazardous materials are anticipated.

CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines
The subject property is in the Dos Palmas Conservation Area of the CVMSHCP. Where a development project is within or adjacent to a CVMSHCP Conservation Area, it is subject to Land Use Adjacency Guidelines to minimize the edge effects of development on the conservation area. Per CVMSHCP Section 4.5.2 (Toxics), “land uses proposed adjacent to or within a Conservation Area that use chemicals or generates bioproducts, such as manure, that are potentially toxic or may adversely affect wildlife and plant species, habitat, or water quality, … shall incorporate measures to ensure the application of such chemicals does not result in any discharge to the adjacent Conservation Area.”

The Project will not generate bioproducts, such as manure. As explained above, it will not use chemicals during operation except propane that will be stored in an approved tank supplied by an industry vendor.

The Project will also involve minimal chemical use such as fuels during construction, whose impacts will be minimized by implementation of BMPs and compliance with applicable laws and regulations as explained above. Impacts to the Conservation Area will be less than significant.

**c) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site and vicinity are currently undeveloped. The proposed Project will not alter the existing circulation pattern in the Project area or adversely impact evacuation plans. The Project will take access from the adjacent unpaved Coachella Canal Road, Hot Minerals Spa Road and Highway 111, all of which are part of the County's established street grid system. The Project does not involve street improvements and is not expected to hinder emergency response or evacuation in the Project area.

Proposed parking and circulation plans will be reviewed by the Fire and Sheriff's Departments to assure that the proposed driveway is adequate for emergency vehicles. These standard requirements will ensure that there will be less than significant impacts associated with emergency response and evacuation.

**d) No Impact.** The Project is not expected to emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous materials except the proper storage and use of propane, fuel and other materials associated with typical construction activities. No school is located or planned within ¼ mile of the site. The nearest school is Saul Martinez Elementary School located approximately 22.53 miles to the northwest. No impact is anticipated.

**e) No Impact.** According to the Project Phase I ESA, the Project site is not included on a list compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.3. The proposed Project will not create a significant hazard to the public or environment.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **22. Airports**<br>a) Result in an inconsistency with an Airport Master Plan? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| b) Require review by the Airport Land Use Commission? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| c) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two (2) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| d) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, or heliport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-20 "Airport Locations," GIS database

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**a) – d) No Impact.** The closest airport is the Desert Air Sky Ranch Airport located approximately 10 miles to the northwest. The subject site is not located within the boundaries of the airport land use compatibility plan. The site is not located in the vicinity of a private airstrip.

The Project site is located approximately 400 feet southwest of the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (CMAGR). The Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP) has three policies on development near the CMAGR.

Policy 11.1 requires that development within two miles of the CMAGR shall remain limited and compatible with the Open Space Foundation Component. The Project is of limited scale and consistent with the Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) General Plan designation in the Open Space Foundation Component.

Policy 11.2 prohibits residential development within the current 60 dB CNEL contours of the CMAGR; the Project is not a residential development and is not subject to Policy 11.2.

Policy 11.3 requires that new development within 3 miles of the CMAGR outer boundary disclose through recordation of an Environmental Constraints Note, avigation (or other) easement, or other instrument as deemed suitable, the potential for noise, vibrations or interference emanating from aviation activities and other military operations performed within or above the CMAGR. The Project will be conditioned by the County to comply with Policy 11.3.

The Project is not expected to result in safety hazards or excessive noise for people working in the area. No impact is anticipated.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **23. Water Quality Impacts**<br>a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| d) Result in substantial erosion or siltation on-site or off-site? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| e) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-site or off-site? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| f) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| g) Impede or redirect flood flows? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| h) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk the release of pollutants due to project inundation? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| i) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-9 "Special Flood Hazard Areas," Figure S-10 "Dam Failure Inundation Zone," 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, June 2021; Hydrology Study For Global Water Farms, Pilot Project Site APN 731-170-001, prepared by Heptagon Seven Consulting, Inc., January 6, 2022.

**Setting**

Domestic Water

The Project site is located within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service boundary. CVWD's domestic water source is groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Indio and Mission Creek Subbasins. CVWD utilizes imported water brought to the region by regional canals to recharge the subbasins and supplement the non-potable water supply. CVWD's domestic water system consists of approximately 97 groundwater production wells, 2,000 miles of pipe, and 133 million gallons of storage in 65 enclosed reservoirs. CVWD currently has 110,093 domestic water connections and provided approximately 99,843 acre-feet (AF) of water in 2020.

CVWD is responsible, under the California Water Code, for analyzing its current and future water supply, and assuring that sufficient supply is available to serve land uses within the District, through the preparation of an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP). CVWD is required to periodically update the Plan.

The proposed Project will result in a water desalination facility with one 13,484-square-foot building on approximately 2.78 acres in unincorporated Riverside County. The project will utilize water from an existing private well for the desalination process but will otherwise not connect to domestic water facilities. The Project is estimated to extract 567,000 gallons per week from the onsite well, equivalent to 108.7 acre feet per year (AFY). The aquifer contains 360,000 acre feet of water. The pilot project will extract 3/10$^{th}$ of 1% of the aquifer annually for the duration of the pilot project. There are few other wells in the area, and limited construction is possible, due to the Project site's location within a CVMSHCP Conservation Area. Therefore, the impact of the Project on the local aquifer will be less than significant.

Wastewater Treatment

CVWD also provides wastewater collection and treatment services to much of the unincorporated areas of the Coachella Valley. CVWD operates five Water Reclamation Plants (WRPs) with a combined capacity of 30.08 million gallons per day. CVWD continually increases the capacity of its wastewater reclamation facilities by constructing new treatment and aeration ponds and other structures. CVWD

implements all requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board pertaining to water quality and wastewater discharge.

The proposed Project will not connect to CVWD's wastewater collection system.

Flood Control/Drainages

The Project site is in the southern end of the Coachella Valley, which has an average rainfall of 3± inches per year. Several watersheds drain the adjoining elevated terrain of nearby mountains to the valley floor. The Project area is subject to short duration but occasionally intense rainfall events which can generate significant amounts of runoff. There are no formal flood control facilities in the Project vicinity. The Project site and areas surrounding it are subject to flood control requirements implemented by the County as a participant in the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to protect surface waters from pollution.

Surface Water Quality

The regional surface water quality is largely dependent upon land uses that affect runoff, such as industrial land uses, urban development, and agriculture. Runoff from stormwater and agricultural irrigation can transport pollutants that collect on the ground surface and affect water quality of receiving streams, rivers, and channels. The Project area is largely undeveloped, and therefore the potential for surface water pollution is limited.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** The Project will result in a water desalination facility that extracts water from an existing well onsite. The Project will require up to two full time employees and utilize a portable restroom from a third-party contractor who will be responsible for proper wastewater disposal in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Project will not require any domestic water or sewer connections to the site.

The Project will include installation of a well head and pump at the existing well and will be required to obtain a Riverside County Environmental Health Permit for reconstruction of a well per County Ordinance No. 682. The permitting process serves to ensure proper reconstruction of the existing well and protection of groundwater quality.

During Project operation, water extracted from the onsite well will be delivered to the desalination facility via an underground pipe. The well water has been tested and found to be brackish, and unfit for use as domestic water. The distilled water produced at the facility will be delivered to a depression area via an underground pipe. The distilled water will be stored in the depression area on the west end of the Project site and allowed to percolate into the ground. The depression area appears to be a dried-up pond from previous canal leakage. This process will not generate, introduce, or discharge any other waste than distilled well water. As described in Section 7, above, the CVCC recommended that the applicant consult with the local Regional Water Quality Control Board and receive approval or permits for this discharge, to assure that it does not impact the Conservation Area. Mitigation Measure HYD-1 is provided below to assure that impacts associated with discharge of the treated water are reduced to less than significant levels.

The salt produced within the building will be stored in a short-walled area covered by a tarp north of the facility. Due to the low salinity of well water, the salt storage area has sufficient capacity to hold salt such that overflow and spillage are unlikely. The salt will be transported offsite periodically and sold to

existing customers such as the National Chloride Company of America. The storage area will provide protection during storms, to prevent the salt from dissolving and infiltrating into the ground.

Because the Project is an industrial development and will create less than 100,000 square feet of impervious surface, it does not need a Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) per Colorado River Basin Regional Board Order No. R7-2008-0001. The Project is still required to incorporate site design best management practices (BMPs) and source control BMPs imposed through conditions of approval or permit conditions.

The imposition of conditions of approval, the requirements of law and Mitigation Measure HYD-1 will assure that the proposed Project will not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements. As such, a less than significant impact is expected.

**b) and i) Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will utilize an existing well onsite to extract water for desalination. At first, the water will be allowed to percolate back into the ground. Once the water quality is established, the distilled water produced will be bottled onsite and sold to existing customers such as microchip processers for industrial uses. The Project is estimated to extract 567,000 gallons per week from the onsite well, equivalent to 108.7 acre feet per year (AFY). The Project site is not in any of the Groundwater Replenishment Assessment Charge (RAC) Areas of Benefit under CVWD's groundwater replenishment program and is thus not subject to the RAC. Additionally, the water is deemed brackish and could not be utilized for potable water sources.

The Project will not receive water service but is located in CVWD's water service area. The 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan (RUWMP) demonstrates that CVWD has available, and can supply in the future, sufficient water to serve additional development in its service area. The groundwater supply is projected at 148,166 AFY in 2045. The Project's water demand for desalination of 108.7 acre-feet is equivalent to approximately 0.07% of the 2045 projected groundwater supply, from a well that produces water which is not fit for domestic water use. Furthermore, if the pilot project proves successful in purifying the well water, it could provide a beneficial impact by increasing the supply of potable water from this and other wells in the future that currently do not generate usable water.

The proposed Project is consistent with the General Plan designation in which it occurs. This General Plan designation was used by CVWD to determine water demand for the future. Therefore, the Project is consistent with CVWD projections for future water needs in the area and will not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or conflict with or obstruct implementation of sustainable groundwater management plan. The Project is not located in any subbasins managed by CVWD and does not interfere with groundwater recharge. As discussed above in subsection a), the Project will not violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements and thus will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan. Overall, impacts would be less than significant.

**c) – f) Less Than Significant Impact.** The subject site is generally flat and contains no rivers or streams. Currently, site drainage appears to be controlled via sheet flow and surface infiltration. The Project will result in new impermeable surfaces onsite, which will increase surface runoff.

Construction of the proposed Project can result in erosion and siltation when disturbing soil during grading and other earthmoving activities. However, these effects would be limited to the construction phase and prevented through compliance with the NPDES program and the incorporation of best management practices (BMPs). BMPs may include phasing of construction activities, wind fences and

sand fences, soil retention, mulching, and perimeter controls and sediment barriers. Soil erosion and/or siltation impacts would be less than significant with implementation of existing regulations.

The Project site is protected by the Coachella Canal and the levee on the north side of the canal. Additionally, the Coachella Canal Siphon #21, located east of the subject property, allows concentrated alluvial flow stormwater to cross the canal. This concentrated flow spreads out back into an alluvial flow condition and enters the Project parcel south of the Project site. Due to the protection by the canal and levee, no offsite flows were considered in the Project hydrology study.

The proposed building will collect the stormwater runoff from the roof and route the collected water into the building's brine tanks for processing and reuse. Should a rain event exceed the capacity of the collection system, stormwater runoff will be conveyed to a retention basin facility located on the south side of the building through a combination of sheet flow and swales, both natural and concrete. The Project hydrology study analyzed the proposed onsite retention system under different storm events. The controlling stormwater runoff event for the Project site is the 3-hour, 100-year event, which will require stormwater retention volume of 5,867 cubic feet. The retention basin is designed with an available storage volume of 9,189 cubic feet, which has sufficient capacity to accommodate the 3-hour, 100-year event. Project design will comply with relevant County standard requirements including those in Ordinance No. 754, which will assure that impacts associated with storm water retention remain less than significant.

To reduce discharge of pollutants into stormwater runoff from the site, the proposed Project is required to incorporate site design BMPs and source control BMPs imposed through conditions of approval or permit conditions. The proposed onsite retention facilities and compliance with existing regulatory programs would ensure that the Project will not result in flooding, 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. Impacts will be less than significant.

**g) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is mapped on FEMA FIRM Map Panel 06065C3600G (Revised 8/28/2008). The site is situated entirely within Zone D, Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard. The proposed Project will include one 13,484-square-foot building with associated infrastructure. Implementation of the proposed onsite drainage retention facilities will ensure that the Project will have less than significant impacts on impeding or redirecting flood flows.

**h) No Impact.** The Project site is located inland, well outside of any tsunami zones. The site is not immediately adjacent to any impounded bodies of water and risks associated with seiches are considered negligible. As discussed above in subsection c, iv), the Project site is not located in a special flood hazard zone. Therefore, potential impacts related to release of pollutants due to Project inundation will not occur.

Mitigation:

HYD-1 In compliance with the requirements of the CVCCC, the applicant shall secure either a waste discharge permit, or a letter stating that no permits are required from the Regional Water Quality Control Board prior to the issuance of a grading permit.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Monitoring:

HYD-A The applicant shall supply the County either a permit or a letter waiving permits from the Regional Water Quality Control Board prior to issuance of grading permit.
**Responsible Party:** Applicant, County Planning Department, RWQCB

| **LAND USE AND PLANNING** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **24. Land Use** a) Physically divide an established 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Riverside County Ordinance No.348, effective 02/24/2022.

**Setting**

The Project site is governed by the policies and land use designations of the Riverside County General Plan and Land Use Ordinance. The site is designated as Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) on the County's General Plan Land Use Map, and is in a Controlled Development Areas (W-2) zone.

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The Project site is currently vacant and undeveloped. The immediate surrounding area is largely undeveloped, except for the Coachella Canal and associated roads and infrastructure to the north. The nearest habitable structures are hot spring resorts and residences approximately a mile to the southeast and northwest. The proposed Project will not physically divide an established community and no impact will occur.

**b) Less than Significant Impact.** As described above, the Project site is designated as Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) on the County's General Plan Land Use Map, which states that "extraction of mineral resources subject to SMP (Surface Mine Permit) may be permissible provided that scenic resources and views are protected." The Project will involve extraction of well water to produce distilled water and salt, and has been determined consistent with a mining use based on consultation with County staff. As discussed above in Section I, given the Project's limited size (13,484-square-foot one story building and associated infrastructure of lower heights), the Project will have less than significant impacts on scenic resources and views. Therefore, the Project will not conflict with the County General Plan.

The Project site is located approximately 400 feet southwest of the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range (CMAGR). The Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP) has three policies on development near the CMAGR.

Policy 11.1 requires that development within two miles of the CMAGR shall remain limited and compatible with the Open Space Foundation Component. The Project is of limited scale and consistent with the Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) General Plan designation in the Open Space Foundation Component.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Policy 11.2 prohibits residential development within the current 60 dB CNEL contours of the CMAGR; the Project is not a residential development and is not subject to Policy 11.2.

Policy 11.3 requires that new development within 3 miles of the CMAGR outer boundary disclose through recordation of an Environmental Constraints Note, avigation (or other) easement, or other instrument as deemed suitable, the potential for noise, vibrations or interference emanating from aviation activities and other military operations performed within or above the CMAGR. The Project will be conditioned by the County to comply with Policy 11.3.
The Project will not conflict with any policy in the ECVAP.

The County's Land Use Ordinance requires a Conditional Use Permit for the proposed mining equivalent use in the W-2 zone. All Project activities will be conducted pursuant to the County's Land Use Ordinance and standards to avoid any conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation. Overall, less than significant impacts are expected.

CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines
The subject property is in the CVMSHCP Dos Palmas Conservation Area. Where a development project is within or adjacent to a conservation area, it is subject to Land Use Adjacency Guidelines to minimize the edge effects of development on the Conservation Area. Per CVMSHCP Sect. 4.5.6 (Barriers), "Land uses adjacent to or within a Conservation Area shall incorporate barriers in individual project designs to minimize unauthorized public access, domestic animal predation, illegal trespass, or dumping in a Conservation Area. Such barriers may include native landscaping, rocks/boulders, fencing, walls and/or signage." The Project site will be enclosed with a 6-foot tall chain link fence with barbed wire. No dumping, trespassing, or domestic animals will be allowed onsite. No additional mitigation is required, and no impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **MINERAL RESOURCES** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **25. Mineral Resources**<br>a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region or the residents of the State? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Potentially expose people or property to hazards from proposed, existing, or abandoned quarries or mines? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure OS-6 "Mineral Resources Area"; Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Riverside County Ordinance No.348, effective 02/24/2022; Mines Online, https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/mol/index.html and Mineral Land Classification, https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/informationwarehouse/index.html?map=mlc, Division of Mine Reclamation, California Department of Conservation, accessed April 1, 2022.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Setting**

In the Coachella Valley, mineral resources are largely limited to aggregates, such as sand, gravel, and crushed stone. Aggregates are major components of concrete, plaster, stucco, road base and fill, which are essential to the construction industry. Important regional deposits of these materials are being actively developed. Other mineral deposits in the region are generally limited to rocky outcroppings within the Little San Bernardino and Santa Rosa Mountains and have not been mined.

Findings of Fact:

**a) - c) No Impact.** According to the Mineral Land Classification by the California Department of Conservation, the Project site is located in MRZ-4, which are areas of no known mineral occurrences where geologic information does not rule out either the presence or absence of significant mineral resources. The Chocolate Mountains to the east are mapped as "Area Not Classified." There are no other state-designated Mineral Resource Zones or permitted mining operations in the general Project vicinity. Although mining is conditionally permitted in the Project area, there are no known mineral resources in the Project area nor any existing mines. The Project will not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site.

The proposed desalination facility will extract well water and produce distilled water and salt. The onsite well water has a low salinity, and the salt product is not a known mineral resource of value to the region and the state. The Project will not create a mine or quarry, and no such facility occurs on the site. No impact is expected.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **NOISE** Would the project result in: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **26. Airport Noise**<br>a) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two (2) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure S-20 "Airport Locations," County of Riverside Airport Facilities Map

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) No Impact. No Impact.** The Project site is not located in the vicinity of an airport or airstrip. The closest airport is the Desert Air Sky Ranch Airport located approximately 10 miles to the northwest. As such, the Project site would not be exposed to excessive noise levels from airport operations. No impact would occur.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **27. Noise Effects by the Project**<br>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, noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| b) Generation of excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan, Table N-1 ("Land Use Compatibility for Community Noise Exposure"), Global Water Farms Noise Impact Analysis, County of Riverside, prepared by Urban Crossroads, March 25, 2022.

**Setting**

To limit population exposure to physically and/or psychologically damaging as well as intrusive noise levels, government at all levels have established standards and ordinances to control noise. In most areas, automobile and truck traffic is the major source of environmental noise. Air and rail traffic, and commercial and industrial activities can be major sources of noise in some areas. Federal and state agencies generally set noise standards for mobile sources such as aircraft and motor vehicles, while local agencies provide regulation of stationary sources.

The Project is in a generally undeveloped area and not near any well-travelled roadways. The adjacent unpaved Coachella Canal Road sees limited traffic, and the Project will generate minimal traffic as a small prototype water desalination facility. Therefore, traffic noise is not a concern for this Project.

In March 2022, a Project-specific noise impact analysis was prepared by Urban Crossroads (Appendix I) to determine the noise exposure generated by the Project, and whether any noise mitigation measures were required in compliance with applicable County noise standards and the CVMSHCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is currently undeveloped and located in the CVMSHCP's Dos Palmas Conservation Area. Sensitive noise receivers of the Project are located within the conservation area and represent potential species of concern, as all human receivers are located over a mile from the Project site and will experience lower noise levels due to additional attenuation from distance and the shielding of intervening structures. The Project noise study identified six sensitive receivers near the Project site perimeter, all of which are placed 3 feet above ground level to represent nesting heights of the species of concern.

To assess the existing ambient hourly noise levels surrounding the Project site, noise level measurements were taken as close to the nearest sensitive receiver locations as possible at five locations near the Project site perimeter. The 24-hour ambient noise levels around the Project site ranged from 38.5 to 42.5 dBA $L_{eq}$. The Project noise study reviewed applicable regulations and guidance

on noise standards and determined the following significance criteria would apply to the Project for noise impact analysis (Table 7).

**Table 7**
**Noise Significance Criteria Summary**

| Phase | Conditions | Significance Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Construction | Noise Level Threshold[1] | 80 dBA $L_{eq}$ |
| | CVMSHCP | 75 dBA $L_{eq}$ |
| | Vibration Level Threshold[2] | 0.01 in/sec RMS |
| Operation | Exterior Noise Level Standards[3] | Daytime 55 dBA $L_{eq}$; Nighttime 45 dBA $L_{eq}$ |
| | If ambient is < 60 dBA $L_{eq}$[4] | ≥5 dBA $L_{eq}$ Project increase |
| | CVMSHCP | 75 dBA $L_{eq}$ |

[1] Federal Transit Administration, Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual.
[2] County of Riverside General Plan Noise Element, Policy N 16.3.
"Daytime" = 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; "Nighttime" = 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.
[3] County of Riverside General Plan Municipal Code, Section 9.52.040.
[4] FICON, 1992.

Construction Noise
During Project construction, noise will be generated by such equipment as trucks, power tools, concrete mixers, and portable generators that when combined can reach high noise levels. Due to distance and intervening vegetation, the Project's highest construction noise levels are expected to range from 40.9 to 52.0 dBA $L_{eq}$ at the six receiver locations, which are below the lowest significance threshold for construction activities (75 dBA $L_{eq}$ under the CVMSHCP). These levels represent a highly conservative estimate that is unlikely to occur during typical construction activities and likely overstates the construction noise levels experienced at each receiver location. Therefore, impacts associated with construction noise will be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Operational Noise
During Project operation, the noise sources on-site are expected to include water pumps, solar panel tracker motors, an air conditioner, and a parking lot. The Project noise study calculated the unmitigated Project operational noise levels during both daytime and nighttime hours. The hourly noise levels generated by the Project at the off-site receiver locations are expected to range from 12.7 to 36.5 dBA $L_{eq}$ from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m and 10.2 to 36.3 dBA $L_{eq}$ from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The Project operational noise levels are below the CVMSHCP threshold of 75 dBA $L_{eq}$. The Project will generate an operational noise level increase ranging from 0.0 to 1.7 dBA $L_{eq}$ at the nearest receiver locations, which is below the 5 dBA $L_{eq}$ increase criteria listed in Table 7 above. Therefore, Project impacts associated with operational noises will be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

**b) Less Than Significant Impact.** Construction activity can result in varying degrees of ground vibration, depending on the equipment and methods used, distance to the affected structures and soil type. Project construction activities are expected to cause only intermittent, localized intrusion regarding ground-borne vibration. According to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), vibration source levels for typical construction equipment are 0.003, 0.076, 0.089 PPV (inch/second or in/sec) at 25 feet for small bulldozer, loaded trucks, and large bulldozer, respectively.

Using these representative vibration levels and the construction vibration assessment methodology published by the FTA, the Project vibration impacts were estimated at nearby receiver locations. At distances ranging over a mile from the Project construction activities to the nearest human receiver, construction vibration velocity levels would be less than 0.00 in/sec PPV and will remain below the threshold of 0.01 in/sec RMS at all receiver locations. Moreover, impacts at the nearest sensitive receiver locations are unlikely to be sustained during the entire construction period but will only occur when heavy construction equipment is operating adjacent to the Project site perimeter. Therefore, the Project-related vibration impacts are considered less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES:** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **28. Paleontological Resources**<br>a) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource, site, or unique geologic feature? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan Figure OS-8 "Paleontological Sensitivity," Paleontological Resource Impact Mitigation Program ("PRIMP") Report

**Setting**

Approximately four million years ago, sediment eroded from the formation of the Grand Canyon was carried in the Colorado River and deposited at the eastern gulf coast, forming an advancing delta that eventually extended across the sea to the west coast and creating a barrier between the Sea of Cortez and the Salton Trough, preventing gulf waters from entering the valley. In the Quaternary Period, the Salton Trough was the site of Holocene Lake Cahuilla, which was a series of lakes that filled portions of the Salton Trough, including much of the Coachella Valley, at different times. Based on a tufa coated boulder near the northeast portion of Travertine Point, there have been at least five lake fillings, and the changes in tufa thickness between the erosion rings indicate that these different fillings had varied duration. The Project site occurs along the former shoreline of the Lake, which last stood about 1700.

CRM Tech conducted a paleontological survey of the Project site in May of 2022. The results of the survey, which included a records search, literature review and field survey, is summarized below. The study is included in its entirety in Appendix H.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation.** As described above, a paleontological investigation was conducted for the Project site, which included a field survey. The research determined that no paleontological resources had been previously identified within one mile of the Project site. The records search identified surface soils on the site as lacustrine deposits associated with Pleistocene to Holocene periods, which have high paleontological sensitivity. No paleontological resources were identified on the ground surface during the field survey, but it is noted that ground visibility was poor due to vegetative cover. As a result of these findings, impacts to paleontological resources uncovered during Project construction could be significant, and mitigation is required. Mitigation Measure PAL-1, provided below, requires the preparation of paleontological resource impact mitigation program (PRIMP), and the

monitoring of the site during earth moving activities. With implementation of this Mitigation Measure, impacts to paleontological resources will be reduced to less than significant levels.

Mitigation:

PAL-1 A paleontological resource impact mitigation program (PRIMP) shall be developed and implemented for the project. The PRIMP should be developed in accordance with the provisions of CEQA and the proposed guidelines of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (2010), and should include but not be limited to the following components:

- Earth-moving operations should be monitored for potential paleontological remains. The monitor should be prepared to quickly salvage fossils, if they are unearthed, to avoid construction delays, but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert construction equipment to allow for removal of abundant or large specimens.
- Collected samples of sediment should be processed to recover small fossils, and all recovered specimens should be identified and curated at a repository with permanent retrievable storage.
- A report of findings, including an itemized inventory of recovered specimens, should be prepared upon completion of the procedures outlined above. The report should include a discussion of the significance of the paleontological findings, if any. The report and the inventory, when submitted to the County of Riverside, would signify completion of the program to mitigate potential impacts on paleontological resources.

Monitoring:

PAL-A Prior to the issuance of grading permits, a PRIMP shall be submitted, reviewed and approved by the County Geologist, and its requirements implemented during earth moving activities. **Responsible party**: Project paleontologist, County Geologist.

| **POPULATION AND HOUSING** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **29. Housing**<br>a) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Create a demand for additional housing, particularly housing affordable to households earning 80% or less of the County's median income? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Induce substantial unplanned 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)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, revised August 4, 2020; Riverside County Ordinance No.348, effective 02/24/2022; CA Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit, Report E-5: Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, January 1, 2011-2021.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Setting**

In 2021, the unincorporated area of Riverside County had a total population of 389,905. The Project site is in a rural, predominantly undeveloped area near the unincorporated community of Niland. Land use in the Project area is governed by the policies and designations of the Riverside County General Plan, including the Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan, and County Land Use Ordinance. The Project site is designated as Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) on the County's General Plan Land Use Map, and is zoned W-2 (Controlled Development Areas). The area around the Project includes vacant, undeveloped lands, the Coachella Canal, a gas line and associated roads and infrastructure. Hot spring resorts and residences are located approximately a mile away. The Project will result in a water desalination facility on currently vacant land.

Findings of Fact:

**a) – c) No Impact.** No structures, housing or persons will be displaced as a result of the Project, because it proposes a new water desalination facility on currently vacant and undeveloped land. Therefore, no impacts related to displacement of people or housing would occur.

Construction of the proposed Project is expected to occur over a four-month period. Due to the small scale of the Project, construction labor is expected to be derived from the local work force within the Coachella Valley. During operation, the proposed Project is expected to have up to two full-time employees, which are likely to be existing residents in the Coachella Valley. The Project is not expected to induce population growth directly or indirectly, as employment opportunities are limited and no new roads or infrastructure will be built. No impacts will result.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **PUBLIC SERVICES** Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities or the 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 following public services: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **30. Fire Services** | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); Riverside County Fire Department In Cooperation With CalFire 2020 Annual Report; County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

**Setting**

The Riverside County Fire Department, in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, provides fire protection and emergency services in unincorporated Riverside County areas, including the Project site. The nearest fire station is Station 41, located approximately 14.73 miles northwest at 99065 Corvina Road in North Shore. There are currently no domestic water lines or fire hydrants in the Project area.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**30. Less Than Significant Impact.** The ultimate development of the Project site will marginally increase the demand on fire service in the County. The proposed desalination facility is of low fire risk as no flammable or explosive materials are involved during operation except a high efficiency propane gas fired boiler. Propane will be stored in approved tank storage supplied by an industry vendor, and the tank will be located approximately 38 feet north of the building adjacent to the site access. Only 2,944 square feet in the proposed building will be occupied by personnel, and the remaining will consist of brine tanks for the desalination process. Therefore, no fire sprinkler system will be required. The brine tanks can hold up to 810,000 gallons of water and will be fitted with piping and a fire department connection to allow a pumper truck to pump water for fire protection. The proposed driveway from the Coachella Canal Road into the site will be 24 feet in width per fire requirements. Because the distance from the Coachella Canal Road to the building is less than 150 feet, no turn-around will be necessary for fire access.

Emergency access is available to the property via the existing public roadway network and to all sides of the building. The Fire Department has reviewed the Project site plan during the pre-application review process to ensure it meets applicable fire standards and regulations. No construction of new or expanded fire services or facilities are required for the proposed Project. Project-related fire protection impacts will be less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **31. Sheriff Services** | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

**Setting**

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services in the Project area. The nearest police station to the Project is located approximately 29.24 miles to the northwest at 86625 Airport Boulevard in Thermal.

Findings of Fact:

**31. Less Than Significant Impact.** Police personnel will be able to access the site via the existing public roadway network and Coachella Canal Road. Development of the site will result in a marginal increase in demand for police services and would not generate any permanent population. Project operation will require up to two full-time employees for the desalination facility. The Project site will be enclosed with a 6-foot-tall chain link fence with barbed wire. Furthermore, all Project activities will be required to comply with all Police Department regulations and procedures. No new or expanded police services or facilities are required for the proposed Project. Less than significant impacts are anticipated.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| 32. Schools | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

**Setting**

The Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) provides public school services in the Project area. The Project site is within the school boundary of Saul Martinez Elementary School located approximately 22.53 miles northwest.

Findings of Fact:

**32. No Impact.** The Project will be required to pay CVUSD the state mandated school fees in place at the time that building permits are secured. These fees are designed to offset the impacts of new development and their associated employees on schools. The proposed industrial use will not generate any student population and therefore will have no impact on schools.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| 33. Libraries | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

Findings of Fact:

**33. No Impact.** The Project will result in two employees, who are likely to be residents of the Coachella Valley. The Project will not generate demand for library services. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| 34. Health Services | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

Findings of Fact:

**34. No Impact.** The Project will employ 2 residents of the Coachella Valley. The Project will not generate demand for health services. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **RECREATION** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **35. Parks and Recreation**<br>a) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Increase the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Be located within a Community Service Area (CSA) or recreation and park district with a Community Parks and Recreation Plan (Quimby fees)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** GIS database, Ord. No. 460, Section 10.35 (Regulating the Division of Land – Park and Recreation Fees and Dedications), Ord. No. 659 (Establishing Development Impact Fees), Parks & Open Space Department Review

**Setting**

In the eastern Coachella Valley, there are traditional parks, school parks, recreational facilities, recreational services, and trails. In the General Plan (2021), approximately 455 acres of land in the eastern Coachella Valley is designated as "Open Space-Recreation." The Project area is in the Desert Recreation District, which manages over 30 parks and recreation facilities in the greater Coachella Valley. The nearest recreational facility is the Salton Sea State Recreation Area, located approximately 8 miles to the northwest.

Findings of Fact:

**a) – c) No Impact.** The proposed Project will result in a small water desalination facility in one building that requires up to two employees. As discussed throughout this document, the Project is not expected to generate population growth in the area. Therefore, the Project will not increase the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities such that the facilities would be substantially degraded. The proposed Project will not require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. No impact is anticipated.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **36. Recreational Trails**<br>a) Include the construction or expansion of a trail system? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The Project occurs in a largely undeveloped area and will result in a small water desalination facility. There are no trails on or adjacent to the site, nor are any planned. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **TRANSPORTATION** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **37. Transportation**<br>a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g. farm equipment)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| d) Cause an effect upon, or a need for new or altered maintenance of roads? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| e) Cause an effect upon circulation during the project's construction? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| f) Result in inadequate emergency access or access to nearby uses? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

**Setting**

The Project site is located in unincorporated Riverside County near the Salton Sea. The Project site can be accessed by unpaved roads associated with the Coachella Canal and adjacent gas line. The nearest paved road to the Project site is Hot Minerals Spa Road to the southeast.

There are no General Plan-designated roads in the Project area per the Eastern Coachella Valley Area Plan (ECVAP; Figure 8) of the County General Plan (2021). The nearest designated road is Highway 111, an Urban Arterial located approximately 4.22 miles south of the Project site.

County General Plan Policy C 2.1 maintains a minimum target level of service (LOS) C for the review of development proposals in the unincorporated County area within the ECVAP. The segment of Highway 111 closest to the Project area had a baseline (2009) LOS D or better and was projected to operate at acceptable levels under future conditions analyzed in the General Plan EIR.

Findings of Fact:

**a) Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project site is currently vacant and undeveloped and does not generate any traffic. The Project will result in the construction of a one-story building (13,484 square feet) for indoor water desalination use. The Project will require up to two employees during operation and generate a very small number of daily vehicle trips. Occasional deliveries, including salt removal every 2± months, and restroom maintenance on a periodic basis, will cause marginal increases in regional traffic. Based on information provided by the Project engineer, Table 8 below provides a conservative estimate of Project trip generation. The site is expected to generate up to eight trips per day, which are assumed to include all activities on the Project site.

**Table 8**
**Estimated Project Trip Generation**

| **Trip type** | **Daily Vehicle Trips** |
|---|---|
| Commute by Up to Two Full-Time Employees | 4 |
| Truck Delivery/Pick Up | 1 |
| Facility Tour Every Two Weeks | 3 |
| **Total** | **8** |

The Project site is located north of Highway 111, which connects to Hot Minerals Spa Road and then Coachella Canal Road, for local and regional trips. Highway 111 in the Project area (between the Imperial County Line and Indio Center Drive) carried 7,500 average daily traffic (ADT) in 2009. The proposed Project will only add up to 8 new daily trips to Highway 111, which is not expected to significantly impact capacity on this roadway as the 8 additional trips would represent approximately 0.1% of the roadway's baseline ADT. In addition, the use is consistent with the General Plan designation for the property, and would have been considered in the traffic analysis for the General Plan. According to the General Plan EIR, Highway 111 in the vicinity of the Project will operate at acceptable levels at General Plan build out. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Alternative Transportation
There are currently no bike lanes, transit routes, or other multi-modal facilities within the Project area. Coachella Canal Road adjacent to the Project site is planned as a Regional Trail: Urban/Suburban and Class I Bike Path (ECVAP Figure 9), but is currently undeveloped. Development of the trail in the future could provide alternative transportation options for the Project's two employees.

SunLine Transit Agency provides bus transit services to the Coachella Valley. There are currently no established or planned bus routes in the Project area. Given the limited number of employees and visitors, impacts on alternative transportation are expected to be less than significant.

Overall, the proposed Project would result in less than significant impacts without conflicting with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system in the County.

**b) No Impact.** According to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), Senate Bill 743 (SB 743) requires amendments to the CEQA Guidelines to provide an alternative to LOS for evaluating

transportation impacts.[4] Particularly within areas served by transit, those alternative criteria must "promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the development of multimodal transportation networks, and a diversity of land uses." (Public Resources Code Section 21099(b)(1).) Measurements of transportation impacts may include "vehicle miles traveled, vehicle miles traveled per capita, automobile trip generation rates, or automobile trips generated." CEQA Guidelines were amended to require all lead agencies to adopt vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a replacement for automobile delay-based level of service (LOS) for identifying transportation impacts. This statewide mandate went into effect July 1, 2020.

The County of Riverside's Transportation Analysis Guidelines for Level of Service & Vehicle Miles Traveled (December 2020) describe specific screening criteria based on the location/project type that can be used to identify when a proposed land use project is anticipated to result in a less than significant impact without conducting a more detailed project level VMT analysis. A land use project need only meet one of the screening thresholds to result in a less than significant impact:

- Small Projects, which include General Light Industrial buildings with area less than or equal to 179,000 SF
- Projects Near High Quality Transit
- Projects in Low VMT Areas

The Project proposes one 13,484-square-foot building for water desalination use, which is considered a general light industrial building, allowing research and development land uses. Therefore, the Project meets the threshold of Small Projects in the County VMT Guidelines and can be determined to a have less than significant impacts on circulation. The Project will not conflict with or be inconsistent with State CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b).

**c) No Impact.** The Project includes one access drive that will be used by the 2 employees on a daily basis, and by suppliers and haulers on an intermittent basis. The drive connects to Coachella Canal Road, which is not used for circulation in the area, but rather for maintenance activities of the Canal. No design features will result in increased hazard and no impact will occur.

**d) No Impact.** The Project is estimated to generate 8 daily trips on Coachella Canal Road. It will not increase the need for maintenance of this or any other County roadway. No impact will occur.

**e) No Impact.** Construction activities will be limited to a metal building, ancillary facilities including pipes, and equipment installation. Construction workers will access the site via Coachella Canal Road, which is not integrated into the County's circulation system. The number of workers will be limited, and will not cause any effect on regional circulation. No impact will occur.

**f) No Impact.** The proposed driveway from the Coachella Canal Road into the site will be 24 feet in width per Fire Department requirements and less than 150 feet in length, thus not requiring a turnaround for fire access. The Project will not result in inadequate emergency access.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

[4] Transportation Impacts (SB 743) by Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), http://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/updates/sb-743/, accessed April 2022.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **38. Bike Trails**<br>a) Include the construction or expansion of a bike system or bike lanes? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** There are currently no bike lanes or other multi-modal facilities within the Project area. Coachella Canal Road adjacent to the Project site is planned as a Regional Trail: Urban/Suburban and Class I Bike Path (ECVAP Figure 9), but is currently undeveloped. Development of the trail in the future could provide alternative transportation options for the Project's two employees.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES** 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, or 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: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **39. Tribal Cultural Resources**<br>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)? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 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.) | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Historical/Archaeological Resources Report, Global Water Farms Pilot Project Site, near the Community of Bombay Beach, Riverside County, California, prepared by CRM TECH, June 1, 2022.

**Setting**

As discussed in the Section V, Cultural Resources, the Project site is located in the Coachella Valley where the most recent identifiable native culture to evolve is the Desert Cahuilla. As part of the Project-specific cultural resource report, CRM Tech contacted 12 area tribes to seek information on the culturally significant resources of the Project area. They included:

- Patricia Garcia-Plotkin, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians;
- Amanda Vance, Chairperson, Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians;

- Michael Mirelez, Director of Cultural Affairs, Cabazon Band of Mission Indians;
- BobbyRay Esparza, Cultural Coordinator, Cahuilla Band of Indians;
- Ray Chapparosa, Chairperson, Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeño Indians;
- Ann Brierty, THPO, Morongo Band of Mission Indians;
- Jill McCormick, THPO, Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Reservation;
- John Gomez, Jr., Cultural Resource Coordinator, Ramona Band of Cahuilla Indians;
- Vanessa Minott, Tribal Administrator, Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians;
- Joseph Ontiveros, THPO, Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians;
- Alesia Reed, Cultural Chair, Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians;
- Sarah Bliss, Cultural Resources Manager, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians.

Five of the 12 tribes responded to the inquiry (see Appendix D). The Morongo Band and the Santa Rosa Band deferred further consultation to other tribes located in closer proximity, with the Santa Rosa Band naming specifically the Torres Martinez band. The Augustine Band stated that they were unaware of any Native American cultural resources in or near the project area but requested immediate notification if such resources were discovered. The Agua Caliente Band requested copies of all cultural resource documentation generated in association with this project for tribal review as well as the presence of approved Agua Caliente Native American Cultural Resource Monitor(s) during any ground-disturbing activities in the project area.

The Torres Martinez requested a meeting with their Cultural Committee, and that a Tribal member accompany CRM Tech archaeologists when they conducted their field survey. Accordingly, Gary Resvaloso Jr. was present for the field survey.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) Less Than Significant Impact.** As discussed above under Cultural Resources, no historical or archaeological resources are known to occur on the subject property. The Project site does not contain any tribal cultural resource 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), based on consultation with the State NAHC. However, the potential for resources was found to be possible, due to previously identified sites within several hundred feet of the Project site. Mitigation Measure CUL-1, therefore requires the presence of both archaeological and Tribal monitors on the site during all earth moving activities.

In compliance with Assembly Bill 52 (AB52), notices regarding this project were mailed to all requesting tribes on March 23, 2022.

No response was received from the Soboba Band of Mission Indians, Twenty-Nine Palms Band, Torres Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla Indians, Cabazon Band of Indians, Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians, Morongo Band of Mission Indians, Ramona Band of Cahuilla Mission Indians, Cahuilla Band of Indians, or the Colorado River Indian Tribe.

The Quechan Indian Nation responded in an email dated March 23, 2022, deferring consultation to closer tribes.

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians responded in an emailed letter dated April 18, 2022. The letter stated that the project is within the tribes Traditional Use Area and that they request to consult.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

On July 15, 2022 the cultural report was sent to the tribe and on June 17, 2022 Planning provided the conditions of approval. Agua Caliente concluded consultation on July 20, 2022 after agreeing with the conditions of approval.

Although no specific physical Tribal Cultural Resources were identified Agua Caliente expressed concerns that the project has the potential for as yet unidentified subsurface tribal cultural resources. The tribes request that a Native American monitor be present during ground disturbing activities so any unanticipated finds will be handled in a timely and culturally appropriate manner. Therefore, a condition of approval that dictates the procedures to be followed should any unanticipated cultural resources be identified during ground disturbing activities has been placed on this project. This is a standard condition of approval and is not considered a mitigation measure for the purposes of this project.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS** Would the project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **40. Water**<br>a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, or storm water drainage systems, whereby the construction or relocation would cause significant environmental effects? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan, June 2021

**Setting**

Domestic Water

The Project site is located within the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) service area for domestic water. The District's domestic water supply is 100% groundwater extracted through a system of wells from the Indio and Mission Creek Subbasins. CVWD relies on imported water brought to the region by regional canals to recharge the basins. CVWD owns and operates the water distribution system within its service area, which is generally located under existing streets in the public right-of-way.

In the 2020 Coachella Valley Regional Urban Water Management Plan (RUWMP), CVWD demonstrated that the District has available, and can supply in the future, sufficient water to serve additional development in its service area.

Findings of Fact:

**a) No Impact.** The Project site is currently undeveloped and will not require any utility connections at buildout. During operation, the Project will rely on onsite solar panels and propane gas for energy and an existing well for water extraction. The proposed Project will utilize a portable restroom from a third-party contractor who will be responsible for proper wastewater disposal in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

As discussed above, the proposed drainage facility onsite and compliance with existing regulatory programs would ensure that the Project will not create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems.

The Project is not expected to require or result in the construction or relocation of new or expanded facilities. No impact will occur.

**b) Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will utilize an existing well onsite to extract water for desalination. As discussed above the Project is estimated to extract 108.7 AFY of well water for desalination. According to the 2020 Coachella Valley RWUMP, the groundwater supply is projected at 148,166 AFY in 2045. The Project's water demand at buildout of 108.7 acre-feet is equivalent to approximately 0.07% of the 2045 projected groundwater supply. Further, the well water being used is not suitable for potable water, having been tested and found brackish. Therefore, the desalination process has the potential to eventually increase the supply of domestic water within the CVWD service area.

The proposed Project is consistent with the General Plan designation in which it occurs. This General Plan designation was used by CVWD to determine water demand for the future. Therefore, the Project is consistent with CVWD projections for future water needs in the area, and will not significantly impact CVWD's planned water supplies during normal and dry years. A less than significant impact is anticipated.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **41. Sewer**<br>a) Require or result in the construction of new wastewater treatment facilities, including septic systems, or expansion of existing facilities, whereby the construction or relocation would cause significant environmental effects? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may service the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Riverside County General Plan (last amended in 2021); County of Riverside Environmental Impact Report No. 521, February 2015.

**Setting**

CVWD also provides wastewater collection and treatment services to much of the unincorporated areas of the Coachella Valley. CVWD operates five Water Reclamation Plants (WRPs) with a combined capacity of 30.08 million gallons per day. CVWD continually increases the capacity of its wastewater reclamation facilities by constructing new treatment and aeration ponds and other structures.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) No Impact.** The Project will utilize a portable toilet during operation for the two on-site workers, which will be services periodically. There are no connections to sanitary sewer in the Project area, nor are any required. No impact will occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **42. Solid Waste**<br>a) 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid wastes including the CIWMP (County Integrated Waste Management Plan)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Estimated Solid Waste Generation Rates, CalRecycle, https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/wastecharacterization/general/rates, accessed April 2022; CalRecycle SWIS Facility/Site Activity Details, https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/SiteActivity/Details/2305?siteID=2426, accessed April 2022.

**Setting**

Burrtec provides solid waste disposal, through a franchise agreement with the Riverside County, and will be responsible for collection and disposal of solid waste from the Project site. Burrtec operates a landfill in Salton City, which has a remaining capacity of 1,264,170 cubic yards as of 2018 and is expected to close in 2038.

Findings of Fact:

**a) and b) No Impact.** Construction of the proposed Project would generate solid waste in the form of trash and debris, construction waste and other materials. Non-hazardous construction materials that cannot be reused or recycled would be accepted for disposal at municipal Riverside County landfills. Any hazardous materials (e.g. chemicals, oils, fuels, lubricants, paints, and solvents) used during construction would be recycled, treated, and/or disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and local laws (See Hazards and Hazardous Materials).

The Project operation as a water desalination facility will not require chemicals other than well water and is expected to produce minimal waste. The products consist of only distilled water and salt, which will be sold to industrial customers, except for distilled water during the initial testing phase which will be allowed to percolate back into the ground. To provide a conservative analysis, based on the Industrial Sector Generation Factors provided by CalRecycle, the proposed Project may generate approximately 17.86 pounds per day of solid waste.[5] State law (AB 939) requires a 50 percent diversion of solid waste

[5] Solid Waste Generation Rate for Industrial Use = 8.93 pounds per employee per day.

from landfills; after diversion, the Project would generate approximately 8.93 pounds per day of solid waste. The proposed Project will contribute less than 0.002% of the Salton City Landfill's remaining capacity.[6] Commingled recyclable materials (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, cardboard, aluminum) will be transported to Burrtec's material recovery facilities for recycling and reuse. The Salton City Landfill has sufficient capacity to accommodate solid waste from the proposed Project.

Burrtec is responsible for maintaining standards that assure that all waste is handled in a manner that meets local, state and federal standards. These requirements will assure that impacts associated with solid waste disposal remain less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

| **43. Utilities** Would the project impact the following facilities requiring or resulting in the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing facilities, whereby the construction or relocation would cause significant environmental effects? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) Electricity? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| b) Natural gas? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| c) Communications systems? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| d) Street lighting? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| e) Maintenance of public facilities, including roads? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| f) Other governmental services? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Project Application Materials

Findings of Fact:

**a) – f) No Impact.** The Project consists of a small pilot facility that will be powered by on-site solar panels. It will not require natural gas or communications systems beyond cell phones and wireless internet access. There are no street lights on Coachella Canal Road, nor are any required for the 8 daily trips the Project will generate. See Transportation Section above as it relates to roadway maintenance. The Project will have no impact on utilities.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required.

[6] Assumes that 1 CY of commercial waste is equivalent to 138 lbs. "Volume to Weight Conversion Factors," US EPA Office of Resource Conversion and Recovery. April 2016.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WILDFIRE** If located in or near a State Responsibility Area ("SRA"), lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zone, or other hazardous fire areas that may be designated by the Fire Chief, would the project: | | | | |
| **44. Wildfire Impacts**<br>a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| 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? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| e) Expose people or structures either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires? | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |

**Source(s):** Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP) maps, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

**Setting**

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) has mapped areas of significant fire hazards in the state through its Fire and Resources Assessment Program (FRAP). These maps place areas of the state into different Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) based on a hazard scoring system using subjective criteria for fuels, fire history, terrain influences, housing density, and occurrence of severe fire weather where urban conflagration could result in catastrophic losses. The Project site is designated as a local responsibility area and near a federal responsibility area, but not located in or near a state responsibility area (SRA) or a very high fire hazard severity zone (VHFHSZ).

Findings of Fact:

**a) - e) No Impact.** According to the FRAP maps by CalFire, the Project site is not located within or near any fire hazard zone including VHFHSZ or a SRA. The nearest fire hazard zone is a VHFHSZ in the Santa Rosa Mountains, located at least 20 miles across the Salton Sea from the Project site. As discussed in Section 21, the Project will have very low fire risks as the desalination facility will not involve flammable or explosive substances other than propane gas tanks stored properly outside the building. The Project will also have adequate access for fire crew, and the brine tanks inside the building will be fitted with piping and a fire department connection to provide ample water for fire protection. The Project will not require additional infrastructure nor impair any emergency response/evacuation plan. As discussed in Sections 14 and 17, the Project is located on flat terrain and not subject to flooding or landslides. No impact will occur regarding wildfire.

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Monitoring: No monitoring is required

| **MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE** Does the Project: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **45.** 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? | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Staff Review, Project Application Materials

Findings of Fact:

**45. Less Than Significant With Mitigation.**

Biological Resources: The Project site is located within a CVMSHCP-designated conservation area. It has been reviewed through the CVCC JPR process, which imposed mitigation measures contained in this document, and will be subject to the Plan's Land Use Adjacency Guidelines. As described throughout this document, the Project will comply with those Guidelines, and will not significantly impact the Dos Palmas Conservation Area. This Initial Study also includes Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-3 to assure that nesting birds and burrowing owl are not impacted by the construction of the proposed Project. As a result, the Project will not 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.

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources were identified on the Project site. However, resources have been identified in the immediate area, which could mean that Project activities could uncover such resources. Mitigation Measure CUL-1 provided in this document will ensure that impacts to cultural and/or tribal resources are less than significant in the event that resources are discovered during Project development.

Overall, there will be no significant environmental impacts which cannot be mitigated. Project related impacts, including cumulative impacts, are considered less than significant with the imposition of these measures.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **46.** Have impacts which 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, other current projects and probable future projects)? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Staff Review, Project Application Materials

| | Potentially Significant Impact | Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated | Less Than Significant Impact | No Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Findings of Fact:

**46. Less Than Significant Impact.** The Project will marginally contribute to the cumulative impacts of development in the Coachella Valley. No other projects are known or scheduled to occur in the Project area. The proposed Project's impacts will be consistent with the General Plan designation for the property, and no significant cumulative impacts are expected. All environmental impacts that could occur as a result of the proposed Project would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures included herein, and when viewed in conjunction with other closely related past, present or reasonably foreseeable future projects, would not be significant.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **47.** Have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |

**Source(s):** Staff Review, Project Application Materials

Findings of Fact:

**47. Less Than Significant Impact.** The proposed Project will not have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly, with the implementation of the County's Ordinances and standard requirements, and requirements of law, as described in this document.

## V. EARLIER ANALYSES

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 as per California Code of Regulations, Section 15063 (c) (3) (D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

Earlier Analyses Used, if any: Riverside County General Plan EIR, Climate Action Plan Update

Location Where Earlier Analyses, if used, are available for review:

Location: County of Riverside Planning Department
4080 Lemon Street 12th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

Revised: 1/24/2023 10:38 AM
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