



**RIVERSIDE COUNTY**  
**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

*John Hildebrand*  
*Planning Director*

**COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE – NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE  
SAPPHIRE SOLAR PROJECT**

**Date:** August 12, 2024

**Project:** Sapphire Solar Project - Draft Environmental Impact Report - Conditional Use Permit No. 220035/Public Use Permit No. 220002/Development Agreement No. 2200018

**To:** Agencies, Organizations, and Interested Parties

**Lead Agencies:** County of Riverside  
TLMA Planning Department  
4080 Lemon Street, 12th  
Floor Riverside, California  
92502-1409

Contact Person: Tim Wheeler  
Phone Number: (951) 955-6060  
Email: [TWheeler@rivco.org](mailto:TWheeler@rivco.org)  
Website: <https://planning.rctlma.org/projects>

**Transmittal Date:** August 12, 2024

**ALL COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 26, 2024.**

A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (Draft EIR) for the Sapphire Solar Project (Project) proposed by Sapphire Solar, LLC (Applicant), as described below, has been completed and is now available for public review. The Draft EIR evaluates potentially significant adverse environmental impacts that could be associated with the Project and identifies project components, mitigation measures, and project alternatives that would avoid, reduce, or eliminate significant impacts. The Draft EIR does not set forth policy for the County of Riverside (County) about the proposed Project's desirability. Rather, it is an information document to be used by decision-makers, public agencies, and the public.

**Project Location:** Approximately 3 miles north of Desert Center, approximately 40 miles west of the City of Blythe, and 3.5 miles north of Interstate 10

**Project Description:** The Applicant is proposing to entitle, construct, operate, maintain, and decommission an up to 117-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station and up to 117 MW battery energy storage system, a generation tie (gen-tie) line, and two access roads.

The Project is located on approximately 1,123 acres, of which approximately 1,082 acres is located on private lands and approximately 41 acres is located on land administered by the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The approximately 41-acre area on BLM-administered lands would be limited to two Linear Facility Routes which would include one 230-kilovolt (kV) gen-tie line, two access roads, and one collector line route. The approximately 1,082 acres of private land would be limited to the Project's solar site (solar site) which would include up to 117 MW of PV solar generation and up to 117 MW of battery storage. The Project

would interconnect with the Southern California Edison (SCE) 230-kV Red Bluff Substation via line tap on the existing Desert Harvest generation-tie line located on lands administered by the BLM. Project construction is anticipated to take approximately 18 months. The Project would be operational as early as December 2025 and would operate for a minimum of 39 years. Public lands administered by BLM within the Project solar application area are lands designated as a Development Focus Area by the BLM Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and associated Record of Decision, and thus, have been targeted for renewable energy development.

The Applicant would site the solar site within the County of Riverside's jurisdiction, requiring a Conditional Use Permit (CUP220035), Public Use Permit (PUP 220002), and Development Agreement (DA2200018) for construction, operation, and decommissioning. Williamson Act contracts would need to be cancelled for 32 parcels (approximately 639.48 acres) that would be included as part of the Project. As part of the Williamson Act contract cancellation process, the parcels under a Williamson Act contract within the Project site would be removed from the County's Agricultural Preserves.

The EIR will consider the environmental impacts of the Project as a whole, including components outside State and local agency jurisdiction. The BLM will prepare and rely on its own environmental review document in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and if approved, BLM will issue a Right-of-Way Grant for portions of the Project on federal lands managed by BLM. Maps and project information may be viewed online at <https://planning.rctlma.org/projects>.

**Significant Impacts on the Environment Anticipated as a Result of the Proposed Project:**

The Draft EIR identifies one or more significant effects on the environment in the following resource area, despite the incorporation of all feasible mitigation. As a result, adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations will be required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in order for the project to be approved.

- Cumulative and Project Specific: Aesthetics

**Public Review Period:** The County of Riverside is the Lead Agency under CEQA and is holding a 45-day public review period of the Draft EIR, during which time the public and interested parties are invited to comment on the Draft EIR for the Project. Comments on the adequacy of the analysis and the appropriateness of the Project may be made in writing or email, indicating the section of concern. Comments may include additional or alternative mitigation measures to those proposed in the document. The project name and numbers should be noted on all correspondence and the comments should indicate if you would like to be notified of public hearings. At this time, public hearings have not yet been scheduled.

**Please note that the public comment period for the Draft EIR is Monday, August 12, 2024, to Thursday, September 26, 2024.** All comments must be submitted to the County of Riverside at the address indicated below and must be received no later than 5:00 pm on September 26, 2024.

**Riverside County Planning Department**

**Attn: Tim Wheeler, Project Planner**

**4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor**

**PO Box 1409**

**Riverside, CA 92502**

**(951) 955-0606**

**email: [TWheeler@rivco.org](mailto:TWheeler@rivco.org)**

**Locations Where the Draft EIR May be Reviewed:** The Draft EIR and its technical appendices may be reviewed online at: <https://planning.rctlma.org/projects>. To request a hardcopy of the Draft EIR, technical appendices or other project documents, please reach out to Tim Wheeler whose contact information is above.