

3.1.5 Parks and Recreation

This section describes the existing parks and recreation facilities within the Project site and vicinity. This section also analyzes the proposed JVR Energy Park Project's (Proposed Project) potential significant impacts on those resources, and whether the Proposed Project would require construction of new parks and recreation facilities.

Comments received in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) included concerns regarding potential impacts to recreational amenities and adjacent park land, including Anza Borrego Desert State Park (SP), Anza Borrego Foundation lands, and federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These concerns are addressed and summarized in this section. A copy of the NOP and comment letters received in response to the NOP are included in Appendix A of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

3.1.5.1 *Existing Conditions*

The 1,356-acre Project site is currently private property and contains no designated parks or recreational facilities. Existing local, state, and federal parks and recreation facilities are located in the area surrounding the Project site. These parks and recreational facilities are described below. Parks and recreational facilities within the vicinity of the Project site are also shown in Figure 3.1.5-1, Existing Park and Recreational Areas in Vicinity.

Community Parks

The 20-acre Jacumba Community Park is located immediately adjacent to the southwestern portion of the Project site. The Jacumba Community Park is owned and maintained by the Jacumba Community Services District. Amenities within the park include a basketball court with bleachers and a baseball/softball diamond.

County of San Diego Parks and Recreational Facilities

Within unincorporated San Diego County, there are more than 48,000 acres of recreational facilities, including day-use parks, sports parks, camping parks, open space preserves, historic sites, community and teen centers, and gardens. In addition, the San Diego region includes a system of regional and community trails that enhance and augment public recreational opportunities.

There are County of San Diego (County) parks within the vicinity of Jacumba Hot Springs and the Project site. The closest day-use County park is Lake Morena County Park, located approximately 20 miles west of the Project site. The closest regional park is Sweetwater Regional Park, located approximately 49 miles west of the Project site.

There are no County open space preserves within the vicinity of Jacumba Hot Springs or the Project site. The closest preserve is Otay Open Space Preserve, located approximately 40 miles west of the Project site, which does not have public access.

The County Trail Program is addressed in detail in the Community Trails Master Plan, which includes designated and proposed regional and community trails. There are no existing or proposed regional or community trails within the vicinity of Jacumba Hot Springs or the Project site (County of San Diego 2009). The closest designated community trails are located north of Boulevard approximately 8 miles northwest of the Project site. There are also no segments of trails in the Jacumba area within the Boulevard Community Trails and Pathways Plan (County of San Diego. 2005).

State-Owned Lands

State-owned lands in the vicinity of the Project site include Anza-Borrego Desert SP, which covers more than 600,000 acres in Southern California. Anza-Borrego Desert SP is the largest state park in California and includes 500 miles of dirt roads, 12 wilderness areas, washes, canyons, a variety of plants and wildlife, and numerous hiking trails (California Department of Parks and Recreation 2020). Anza-Borrego Desert SP lands (including the Carrizo Canyon Wilderness) are generally located north of Interstate (I) 8, but also include non-connected tracts south of I-8. The State Parks lands south of I-8 do not include wilderness.

Portions of Anza-Borrego Desert SP, as shown in Figure 3.1.5-1, are located in the vicinity of and adjacent to the Project site. These state lands include the mesa to the immediate west of the Project site (i.e., north of Old Highway 80 and the Jacumba Hot Springs community). These lands were recently transferred from the Anza Borrego Foundation to the California Department of Parks and Recreation. For the purposes of this analysis, this portion of the Anza-Borrego Desert SP is considered to be lands that support passive recreation. In addition to undeveloped mountain terrain and access roads, the area is crossed by the same transmission infrastructure crossing the Project site. Gates to the area currently exist on nearby roads, including Railroad Street and Desert Rose Ranch Road.

Federally Owned Lands

Federal public lands managed by BLM are located in the area surrounding the Project site. These BLM-managed lands include a portion of Round Mountain, Table Mesa Recreational Management Zone (RMZ), Airport Mesa RMZ, Carrizo Gorge Wilderness, and Jacumba Wilderness, all of which are described below.

A J-shape tract of BLM-managed land encompasses the western slope of Round Mountain and noncontiguous lands along the Carrizo Gorge (located north of I-8 and between tracts of State Parks lands) (see Figure 3.1.5-1). The eastern portion of Round Mountain is located within the Project site boundary.

Table Mountain RMZ features prominent mountain terrain north of the Project site and I-8, which includes Gray Mountain and Table Mountain. Table Mountain RMZ is managed for its “historical, cultural and natural qualities,” and also provides a variety of “primitive, natural, and unconfined recreational opportunities” (BLM 2008).

Airport Mesa RMZ is located east of the Project Site. This RMZ is managed by BLM for its rural recreational qualities and provides opportunities for hiking (BLM 2008). The RMZ abuts the United States/Mexico international border on the south, and a portion of the landform boundary with the border is unfenced.

The Carrizo Gorge Wilderness is located north of I-8 and approximately 1.7 miles northeast of the northernmost boundary of the Project site. Located west of Carrizo Gorge and the Carrizo Canyon Wilderness, which encompasses State Park lands, the Carrizo Gorge Wilderness is managed by BLM and includes moderate and steep terrain of the In-Ko-Pah Mountains. The wilderness provides opportunities for solitude and non-motorized recreation, including camping, hiking, wildlife viewing, and photography (BLM 2020). Certain uses, including motorized vehicles and other forms of mechanical transport, are prohibited within the federally designated wilderness (BLM 2020).

Jacumba Wilderness is located approximately 3 miles of the Project site. This wilderness area includes rugged ridgelines and narrow valleys. The Jacumba Wilderness provides opportunities for hiking and camping (BLM 2019).

3.1.5.2 Regulatory Setting

State

California Government Code Section 66477 (The Quimby Act)

Section 66477 of the California Government Code provides cities and counties with the authority to require, by ordinance, land dedications and/or fee payments for recreation facilities as a condition to the approval of tentative and parcel maps. The Quimby Act outlines a number of items that must be contained in the local ordinance, including standards from which calculations can be made for the amount of land or fee that must be given for recreation purposes. In addition, the dedications and fees can only be used for creating or rehabilitating recreational facilities, and the city/county must develop a timeline for construction of the facilities.

The Quimby Act sets forth a standard ratio of dedicated park area within a city to the number of residents. Based on the average number of people per household and an approved or tentatively approved map, the Quimby Act requires a dedication of at least 3 acres of park land and/or cash in-lieu fees for every 1,000 residents generated by a proposed residential project. The Proposed Project would supplement the region’s energy supply and would not encourage population or housing growth; therefore, compliance with the Quimby Act would not apply.

Local

County of San Diego General Plan

The County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element provides for future growth and development in the County with respect to the conservation, management, and use of natural and cultural resources; the protection and preservation of open space; and the provision of park and recreation resources (County of San Diego 2011).

Mountain Empire Subregional Plan

The Mountain Empire Subregional Plan establishes goals and policies to guide development within the areas of Jacumba, Tecate, Potrero, Boulevard, Campo/Lake Morena, and the Mountain Empire Balance (including the community of Tierra del Sol), which together comprise the Mountain Empire Subregion of southeastern San Diego County (County of San Diego 2016a). The goals and policies of the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan are intended to be more specific than those of the County General Plan, as they consider the distinct history, character, and identity of Mountain Empire communities. The Mountain Empire Subregional Plan contains nine elements: community character, land use, housing, mobility, public facilities and services, conservation, recreation, energy conservation, and scenic highways. Each element contains goals and policies intended to responsibly direct the development of the subregion. The Project site lies within the Jacumba Subregional Group Area Plan, which is a portion of the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan that focuses specifically on Jacumba.

The following recreation policies and recommendations of the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan are applicable to the Proposed Project (County of San Diego 2016a):

- **Goal 1.** Support recreational opportunities to meet community needs and enrich the lives of all residents by establishing a balanced system of recreation facilities and services.
 - **Policy and Recommendation 1.** Through the cooperation of the San Diego County Parks and Recreation Department and local sponsor groups, the coordination and maximum use of existing recreational facilities shall be undertaken.
 - **Policy and Recommendation 6.** Future Development – Local Facilities: The Mountain Empire Subregion meets the County General Plan goal for local park land provided per 1,000 in population. Consequently, County Parks Department and local Sponsor Group’s review of park and recreation needs has concentrated on facility development rather than acquisition. Review of possible future acquisition needs should occur along with large-scale development proposals. Facility development is

recognized and prioritized as follows and is to occur as staffing, funding, and maintenance and operation capabilities become available.

- Jacumba – Develop local park facilities at the 20-acre Jacumba Community Park site in accordance with Jacumba Community Services District maintenance capabilities and the needs of the citizens of Jacumba.
- ***Policy and Recommendation 7.*** Local Park Acreage Goals. The County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, Parks, Open Space, and Recreation section establishes a goal of ten acres of local park land for every 1,000 persons. Aggregate totals for the Mountain Empire Subregion show that it currently has 15.3 acres of local park land for every 1,000 population, which by the year 2030 this will shrink to 10.0 acres per 1,000 population.
- ***Policy and Recommendation 8.*** The Jacumba Sponsor Group recommends that Park Land Dedication fees collected from the Ketchum Ranch Specific Plan area be spent for park and recreation facilities within the Jacumba Planning Area.

Park Lands Dedication Ordinance

Last updated in July 2018, the Park Lands Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) (County Ordinance No. 10554) identifies policies and standards for the provision of park lands in compliance with the state's Quimby Act. The ordinance establishes park dedication and in-lieu fee requirements and is intended to provide land for local active parks only.

The PLDO allows project applicants the option of dedicating park lands, paying in-lieu fees (which the County would use to acquire and/or improve park lands), or some combination thereof for residential development projects. Dedicated park land must be PLDO Eligible Recreation, including adventure play areas, amphitheaters, bicycle parks, dog parks, community event spaces, equestrian facilities, exercise stations, Frisbee/disc golf parks, skate parks, trails, and other uses as approved by the Director. Dedicated park land also must be level or gently sloping land (maximum slope of 10%) (County Ordinance No. 10554).

The Proposed Project is a solar energy facility that would not encourage population or housing growth in the Jacumba area, and does not propose any residential development; therefore, no new park land would be required per the PLDO. Compliance with the Quimby Act and the PLDO would not apply to the Proposed Project.

County Trails Program – Community Trails Master Plan

The County Trails Program and the Community Trails Master Plan were adopted in 2005 by the County Board of Supervisors. The Community Trails Master Plan sets forth criteria and guidelines for acquisition, dedication, development, operation, and maintenance of non-motorized trails and

pathways. These trails and pathways are intended to address an established public need for recreation and transportation, as well as health and quality of life benefits associated with use of these facilities (hiking and bike riding). The goal of the County Trails Program is to establish a system of interconnected and continuous regional and community trails to meet the needs of County residents. The County Trails Program involves trail development and management on public, semi-public, and private lands. The Community Trails Master Plan is the implementing document for the trails program and contains adopted individual community trails and pathway plans. There are no existing or proposed community trails identified in the Jacumba area in the Community Trails Master Plan (County of San Diego 2009).

The Regional Trails Plan, as part of the Community Trails Master Plan, identifies County-approved general alignment corridors of regional trails in the County. Regional trails have characteristics and conditions that serve a regional function by covering long linear distances, transcending community and/or municipal borders, having state or national significance, or providing important connections to existing parks and preserves (County of San Diego 2009). The Regional Trails Plan includes nine trails that provide significant north/south and east/west trail corridors that cross through the County. There are no regional trails identified in the Jacumba area.

County of San Diego Parks Master Plan

The County of San Diego Parks Master Plan serves as a guiding document for the acquisition and development of future parks and recreation facilities in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. The purpose of the Parks Master Plan is to document the current conditions and analyze park shortages and distribution inequities in a way that is consistent with County and Department of Parks and Recreation approved plans and policies. The Parks Master Plan is intended to assist in the development of initiatives that will be supported by the community and lead to improvements within the County's Park and Recreation system (County of San Diego 2016b).

As of 2016, the Mountain Empire Community Plan area (which includes the Project site) is experiencing a 5.46-acre deficiency in local park facilities to meet the standard. However, the Mountain Empire Community Plan area exceeds the regional park standards by 2,666.87 acres. Regional parks do not typically provide the same level and concentration of amenities as local parks, however; therefore, the Mountain Empire's deficiency of local parks should be addressed in future developer park requirements (County of San Diego 2016b).

3.1.5.3 Analysis of Proposed Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

The Proposed Project is a 643-acre solar energy facility, which would include a switchyard that would be transferred to San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). It is anticipated that the applicant will construct the switchyard and will transfer the switchyard to SDG&E for operation after construction. For the purposes of this analysis, the switchyard (as described in Chapter 1, Project

Description) is a component of the Proposed Project and has been analyzed as part of the whole of the action. However, this EIR highlights the specific analysis of the construction and operation of the switchyard under each threshold of significance in the event that responsible agencies have California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) obligations related to the switchyard.

3.1.5.3.1 Deterioration of Parks and Recreational Facilities

Guidelines for Determining Significance

The County's Guidelines for Determining Significance does not include a section on parks and recreation. Therefore, this EIR will apply the significance criteria set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines to determine the Proposed Project's direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

A significant impact would result if the Proposed Project would:

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

Analysis

The Project site has no existing parks or recreational facilities. Implementation of the Proposed Project would involve construction and operation of an un-staffed solar energy facility. The Proposed Project would not include any residential use, such as a residential subdivision, mobile home park, or construction for a single-family residence that would cause a direct increase in population. The Proposed Project would not include any new or physically altered facilities (parks) or any recreational component, such as a hotel, resort, campground, or other facility that would attract or accommodate an increase in visitors to the area that would indirectly increase the use or demand for recreational and park facilities and services. Since construction workers (up to 500 workers during peak construction) would be working in the area temporarily and are not expected to relocate to the area with their families, they would not be expected to generate a substantial demand for local park services. No increase in the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities would result from the Proposed Project.

During operations, the Proposed Project would be an un-staffed facility that would be monitored remotely. No increase in the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities would result from the Proposed Project during operations.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not increase the population in the area, and thus would not contribute to an increase in demand for parks and recreational services resulting in the substantial physical deterioration of regional recreational facilities or accelerating the deterioration of regional parkland. For this reason, the Proposed Project would have **less than significant impacts** on parks and recreational facilities.

Switchyard

The switchyard site is currently undeveloped with no existing parks or recreational facilities. Implementation of the switchyard would involve construction and operation of an un-staffed energy facility. The switchyard would not include any residential use, such as a residential subdivision, mobile home park, or construction for a single-family residence that would cause a direct increase in population. The switchyard would not include any new or physically altered facilities (parks) or any recreational component, such as a hotel, resort, campground, or other facility that would attract or accommodate an increase in visitors to the area that would indirectly increase the use or demand for recreational and park facilities and services. Since construction workers (40 construction workers during peak construction) would be working in the area temporarily and are not expected to relocate to the area with their families, they are not expected to generate a substantial demand for local park services. Temporary construction of the switchyard is not anticipated to increase the use of existing parks or other recreational facilities. The switchyard would not directly, through physical alteration, or indirectly, through increased use, result in the necessity to construct or expand recreational facilities or the need for new or physically altered parks and recreation facilities.

During operations, the switchyard would be an un-staffed facility that would be monitored remotely. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not increase the population in the area, and thus would not contribute to an increase in demand for parks and recreational services resulting in the substantial physical deterioration of regional recreational facilities or accelerating the deterioration of regional parkland. For this reason, the switchyard would have **no impacts** on parks and recreational facilities.

3.1.5.3.2 Construction of New Recreational Facilities

Guidelines for Determining Significance

The County's Guidelines for Determining Significance does not include a section on parks and recreation. Therefore, this EIR will apply the significance criteria set forth in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines to determine the Proposed Project's direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts.

A significant impact would result if the Proposed Project would:

Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which would have an adverse effect on the environment.

Analysis

The Project site has no existing parks or recreational facilities. As discussed above, implementation of the Proposed Project would not increase the population or generate demand for additional park or recreational facilities. Further, the Proposed Project would not include or require the construction or expansion of any recreational facilities. Thus, **no impact** would occur.

Switchyard

The switchyard site is currently undeveloped with no existing parks or recreational facilities. As discussed above, implementation of the switchyard would not increase the population or generate demand for additional park or recreational facilities. Further, the switchyard would not include or require the construction or expansion of any recreational facilities. Thus, **no impact** would occur.

3.1.5.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis

As previously discussed, the Proposed Project would involve construction and operation of an unstaffed solar energy facility and would not result in the substantial physical deterioration of regional recreational facilities or accelerate the deterioration of regional parkland. Further, the Proposed Project would neither directly or indirectly result in the necessity to construct or expand recreational facilities or the need for new or physically altered park or recreational facilities. Because the Proposed Project would result in no impacts to park and recreational facilities, there would also be **no cumulative impact**.

3.1.5.5 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

The Proposed Project would not include or require the construction or expansion of any recreational facilities, and **less than significant impacts** would occur related to the increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities.

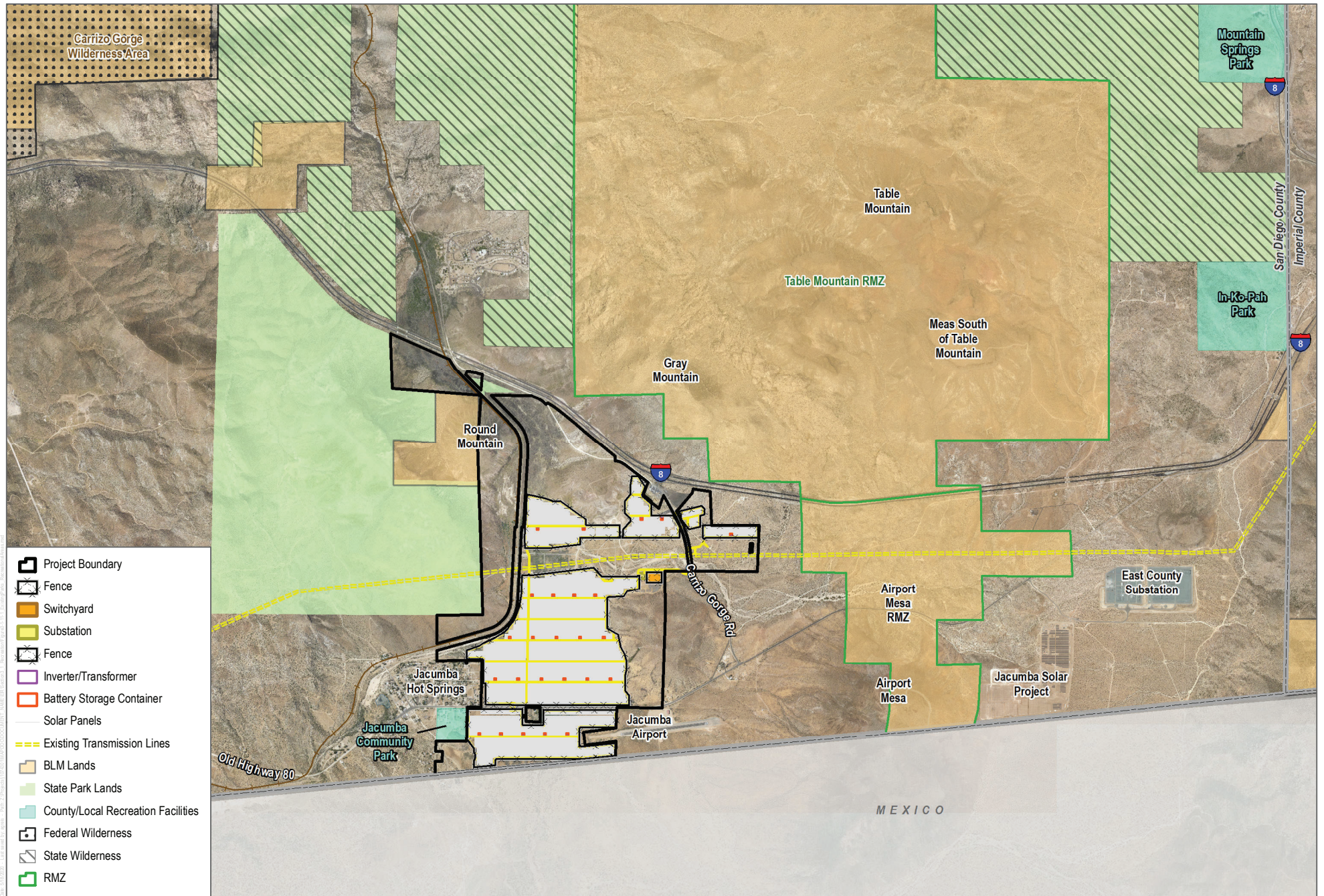
3.1.5.6 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is necessary.

3.1.5.7 Conclusion

The Proposed Project would result in **less than significant impacts** to park and recreational facilities and, therefore, no mitigation would be required.

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SOURCE: BLM 2020; SANGIS 2017, 2020

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FIGURE 3.1.5-1
Existing Park and Recreational Areas in Vicinity

JVR Energy Park Project EIR

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