

Response to Comment Letter I10

Julie Atherton

I10-1 The comment states the commenter is a resident of Jacumba and is against the industrial-size JVR Energy Park that would place 300,000 photovoltaic cells and 75 battery storage containers on 643 acres of land in Jacumba. In response, the County acknowledges the commenter’s opposition to the Proposed Project. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.

I10-2 The comment states this enormous project is wrong for the rural landscape. The comment also states it will lower property values, destroy scarce wildlife habitat, the community character, and eliminate scenic vistas. In response to the comment regarding property values, CEQA requires analysis of physical changes to the environment. Please refer to Global Response GR-1 for a discussion of CEQA and socioeconomic impacts. Regarding impacts to the natural environment, Section 2.3 Biological Resources of the Draft EIR analyzes the impacts to biological resources. The Draft EIR determined that with implementation of mitigation measures, impacts to biological resources would be less than significant. With respect to community character and scenic vistas, Section 2.1 Aesthetics of the Draft EIR includes an analysis of the Proposed Project’s visual impacts to community character and scenic vistas. The Draft EIR concluded that the Proposed Project would result in significant impacts to the visual community character of Jacumba Hot Springs and to focal or panoramic vistas. Implementation of mitigation measures (**M-AE-1 through M-AE-6**) would reduce the visual impacts, but not to a level of less than significant. The impacts would remain significant and unavoidable. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits, including regionwide or statewide environmental benefits of a proposed project against its significant and unavoidable impacts when determining whether to approve the project. When a lead agency approves a project, the agency must state in writing the specific reasons to support its action; this statement is referred to a “Statement of Overriding Considerations.” Under CEQA, the County must make a Statement of Overriding Considerations” to approve the Proposed Project.

I10-3 The comment states the Project “will squander any potential for expanding our town because it consumes the best land next to our village.” In response, as stated in the Draft EIR the lifespan of the Proposed Project is 35 years, not including construction and decommissioning. Accordingly, the Project is not a permanent land use and will

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- not preclude the potential for the Project site from being used differently in the future. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I10-4** The comment states the Project “may also negatively impact local temperatures when easterly winds pass across hundreds of acres of hot solar panels, drying out trees and vegetation at the eastern end of town as well as drawing down local aquifers.” In response, please refer to Global Response GR-2 for a discussion of solar facilities and heat effects. Regarding draw down of local aquifers, Section 2.7 Hydrology includes an analysis of the Proposed Project’s impacts to groundwater resources. Specifically, Section 2.7.3.4 concludes that the reduction in groundwater storage from the Proposed Project’s groundwater extraction would not exceed the County’s threshold. Project Design Feature **PDF-HYD-2** requires a Groundwater Monitoring and Reporting Program, which is included as an Appendix A to the Groundwater Resources Investigation Report (Appendix J to the Draft EIR). Impacts to groundwater resources would be less than significant.
- I10-5** The comment states the JVR Park does not conform to the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan adopted on August 3, 2011. In response, an analysis of the Proposed Project’s consistency with the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan is included in Section 3.1.4 Land Use and Planning of the Draft EIR. Specifically, please refer to Table 3.1.4-5. The Draft EIR concluded that the Proposed Project would not conflict with applicable land use plans and policies, including the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan.
- I10-6** The comment states, “The County Planning Commission and County Supervisors must reject this project and choose the no project alternative.” The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.