

Response to Comment Letter I11

Victor Ayala

I11-1 The comment states the commenter is a resident of Jacumba and is against the JVR Energy Park as described in the Draft EIR. 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.

I11-2 The comment states a project that “would place 300,000 photovoltaic cells on 643 acres in Jacumba Valley adjacent to our village core on two sides is wrong for our rural community.” The comment also states if this massive project is built, it will destroy community character, lower property values, destroy scarce wildlife habitat, and eliminate available land that would be better used for Jacumba’s future expansion.

In response to the comment regarding community character, Section 2.1 Aesthetics of the Draft EIR includes an analysis of visual impacts to community character. The Draft EIR concluded that the Proposed Project would conflict with the established visual character of Jacumba Hot Springs (**Impact AE-1**) and would conflict with the small-town characteristics and open characteristics of the Project site (**Impact AE-2**). 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.

Regarding property values, CEQA requires analysis of physical changes to the environment. Please refer to Global Response GR-1 in the Final EIR for a discussion of CEQA and socioeconomic impacts. Regarding impacts to wildlife habitat, Section 2.3 Biological Resources of the Draft EIR analyzes the impacts to wildlife habitat and other biological resources. The Draft EIR determined that with implementation of mitigation measures, impacts to biological resources would be less than significant. With respect to concerns regarding Jacumba’s future expansion, as stated in the

Volume II – Individual Responses to Comments

- 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 not preclude the potential for the Project site from being used differently in the future.
- I11-3** The comment states the “JVR Park would dwarf our town six times over and negatively impact Jacumba future vitality as a place that people would want to live or even visit.” In response, please refer to Global Response GR-1 in the Final EIR for a discussion of CEQA and socioeconomic impacts. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I11-4** The comment states the Project does not adhere to the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan adopted in 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.
- I11-5** The comment states “The County Planning Commission and County Supervisors must reject this project because point-of-use solar remains an environmentally better option.” In response, Chapter 4 Project Alternatives of the Draft EIR includes a discussion of alternatives considered and rejected, one of which is the Distributed Generation and Storage Policy (Rooftop Solar Panels) Alternative. The Draft EIR found that the rooftop solar panels alternative would result in significant reduction in impacts as compared to the Project, but that the alternative is outside the control of, and could not be implemented by the Project applicant, the County or other counties where the Project’s electricity would be utilized in a reasonable period of time. Further, the Draft EIR concluded that the rooftop solar panels alternative would not meet most of the Project objectives.