

## Response to Comment Letter I23

Walter McKee

- I23-1** The comment states the commenter lives in Jacumba and is appalled by the JVR Energy Park as described in the October 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Report. 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.
- I23-2** The comment states this project is not compatible with the small rural village nor land uses in the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan. 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.
- I23-3** The comment questions, “How anyone could think that the placement of 300,000 solar cells on 643 acres of the best available real estate in Jacumba is an appropriate use, defies comprehension.” In response, the comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I23-4** The comment states given the project is six times the size of our village, it will introduce equipment generated noise into their quiet town and negatively impact property values, community character, and the natural environment. In response to the comment regarding equipment generated noise, Section 2.9 Noise of the Draft EIR analyzes the Proposed Project’s noise impacts, including noise from stationary equipment. The Draft EIR determined that the equipment and layout as proposed would be compliant with County noise requirements; however, if the equipment was to change or layout was different than what was evaluated in the EIR operational noise levels have the potential to exceed the County’s Noise Ordinance (**Impact NOI-1**). Implementation of mitigation measure **M-NOI-1** would reduce this potential impact to less than significant. In addition, noise impacts from panel washing (**Impact NOI-2**) was also identified as potential significant. Implementation of mitigation measure **M-NOI-2** would reduce the potential impact to less than significant.

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.

## Volume II – Individual Responses to Comments

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With respect to 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 impacts to the natural environment, Section 2.3 Biological Resources of the Draft EIR analyzes the impacts to vegetation communities, special status plants, wildlife, and other biological resources. The Draft EIR determined that with implementation of mitigation measures, impacts to biological resources would be less than significant.

**I23-5** The comment states, “Please say no to 12-foot high solar panels on both sides [o]f scenic Old Highway 80, next to the Jacumba Airport, our senior center and park, and homes.” The comment also states, “If approved, this project will only accelerate the exodus of residents and businesses away from our community.” In response, please refer to Global Response GR-1 in the Final EIR regarding 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.

**I23-6** The comment states “County Supervisors must vote for 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.