

Response to Comment Letter I94

Gary Barton

- I94-1** The commenter states he has lived within the area for decades and was shocked to hear of this proposal due to the proximity to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the Fremont Carrizo Railway. In response, a portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is located to the west of the Project site. As discussed in Section 2.3 Biological Resources and shown in Figure 2.3-8 Potential Mitigation Areas of the Draft EIR, portions of the Project site adjacent to State Park lands are identified as a biological mitigation area which would be placed in a permanent open space easement. A section of the San Diego and Arizona Eastern Railway transects the western portion of the Project site. This railway is not in service and the Proposed Project would not preclude future service along this railway corridor. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I94-2** The commenter asks why an industrial project is planned in the heart of a residential desert community. In response, the Project proposes a solar energy generation and battery energy storage facility which is considered a Major Impact Service and Utility type of use that requires a Major Use Permit. Please refer to Section 3.1.4 Land Use and Planning of the Draft EIR for further discussion of County land use regulations. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I94-3** The commenter states the Imperial Valley would be more appropriate and asks why not put the project there. Please refer to Global Response GR-6 I the Final EIR regarding alternatives and alternative locations. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.
- I94-4** The commenter asks what impact the project will have on families in the community. In response, the comment does not identify specific impacts to or concerns regarding families, thus it is not possible to provide a specific 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.
- I94-5** The commenter asks what impact the project will have on future growth and what kind of growth. In response, as stated in Section 6.3 Growth Inducing Effects of the Draft EIR, the Project would not induce population growth in the community of Jacumba Hot Springs or the Mountain Empire Subregion. Also, please refer to Global Response GR-

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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.

I94-6 The commenter asks what chemicals and pesticides will be used and sprayed in the local community and what the effects on the community are. In response, the Proposed Project would include landscaping outside the perimeter fencing as visual screening in areas adjacent to the community of Jacumba Hot Springs and along Old Highway 80. The Proposed Project also includes revegetation (hydroseeding) of the graded areas under the solar panels in accordance with **PDF-HYD-3** (see Final EIR). Mitigation measure **M-BI-8** applies to the application of any herbicides by the Proposed Project, and limits herbicide application to just those products that are permitted by the County agricultural commissioner. In addition, herbicide application must be conducted by a licensed Pest Control Adviser with at least two years' experience. With the implementation of **M-BI-8**, the application of herbicides, which would occur at least once per year, will be governed by defined standards and applied professionally. No pesticides will be used by the Proposed Project.

I94-7 The commenter asks what the life expectancy of this plant is. In response, the lifespan of the solar facility equipment is conservatively estimated to be 35 years, which is the term of the Major Use Permit for the Proposed Project. Thus, the Proposed Project would be an interim use, and absent further County approval, would be decommissioned after 35 years of operational life. Decommissioning requires dismantling and removal of all Project components, except the Switchyard Facilities, from the Project site. Please refer to Section 1.2.1.3 Decommissioning of the Final EIR. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.

I94-8 The commenter asks where will used and defective panels be disposed of and what are the associated costs. In response, generally, if the panels can no longer be used in a solar facility, the materials can be readily recycled. The aluminum can be resold, and the glass can be recycled. Any hazardous components of the PV panels would be removed and properly disposed of offsite prior to recycling. All recycling would be in accordance with state and County regulations. Remaining materials that cannot be recycled or reclaimed would be limited and would be contained and disposed of offsite, consistent with County regulations. The Draft EIR is not required to analyze the costs of disposing of used and defective panels.

I94-9 The commenter asks how the project will benefit Jacumba Hot Springs. In response, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Draft EIR assesses the environmental effect of the Proposed Project, identifies means of avoiding and

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lessening adverse impacts, and evaluates alternatives to the Proposed Project. The EIR does not evaluate community benefits of the Proposed Project. However, because the Project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts (**Impacts AE-1 thru AE-9, AE-CU-1 and AE-CU-2, and MR-1**), Section 15093 of CEQA requires the decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological or other benefits, including region-wide or statewide environmental benefits, of a proposed project against its unavoidable impacts when determining whether to approve the project. Thus, the Proposed Project will require the Board of Supervisors to make a statement of overriding considerations in order to approve 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.

- I94-10** The commenter asks will the project be forced on the community and if so why. In response, the Proposed Project requires approval by the County Board of Supervisors. The comment does not raise an issue regarding the adequacy of the analysis contained within the Draft EIR; therefore, no further response is required.

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