

CHAPTER 8.0 OTHER CEQA CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter summarizes the information presented in Chapters 2.0 and 3.0 of this Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to address the broader questions posed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15126.2. These include significant effects that cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels, significant irreversible environmental changes, and growth-inducing impacts. In addition, Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines requires that EIRs include a discussion of the potential energy impacts of proposed projects, with particular emphasis on avoiding or reducing inefficient, wasteful and unnecessary consumption of energy in order to assure energy implications are considered in project decisions. Energy consumption is addressed below under Section 8.2.

8.1 Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project That Cannot Be Mitigated to Less Than Significant

Table S-2 of this Program EIR summarizes the results of the environmental analysis completed for the Proposed Project in Chapter 2.0. Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce environmental impacts associated with aesthetics, air quality, biology, cultural resources, and noise and are included in Table S-2. The mitigation measures would reduce potentially significant impacts, but not below a significant level for aesthetics and air quality. Additional “infeasible” mitigation measures were considered in attempting to reduce impacts to below a level of significance. A detailed analysis of significant environmental effects, mitigation measures and infeasible mitigation measures is discussed in Chapter 2.0 of this Program EIR.

The following are significant environmental effects of the Proposed Project that cannot be mitigated to less than significant:

- Aesthetics
 - Scenic Vistas: Views from Interstate-8 and Old Highway 80 (AE-LE-LW-1, AE-PP-1, AE-CUM-PP-1)
 - Visual Character or Quality: Alteration of visual landscape (AE-TDS-1, AE-TDS-2, AE-R-1, AE-LE-LW-2, AE-PP-2, AE-CUM-PP-2)
 - Light or Glare: Glare impacts to residents and motorists (AE-TDS-3, AE-TDS-4, AE-R-2, AE-R-3, AE-LE-LW-3, AE-PP-3)
- Air Quality
 - Conformance to Federal and State Ambient Air Quality Standards: short-term construction emissions (NO_x) (AQ-PP-1, AQ-CUM-1)

- Land Use
 - Conflict with General Plan Policies COS 11.1 and 11.3 (LanEast and LanWest only; LU-LE-1, LU-LW-1, LU-PP-1)

8.2 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes

Irreversible long-term environmental changes associated with the Proposed Project would include those potential significant impacts described in Chapters 2.1 through 2.6, as well as environmental effects analyzed in Chapter 3.1 of this EIR. Construction of the Proposed Project would require fossil fuels, a nonrenewable resource, to power construction vehicles. In exchange for using nonrenewable and non-retrievable resources, the project would provide a source of clean, renewable energy. Over the operational life of the Proposed Project, it would contribute incrementally to the reduction in demand for fossil fuel based electricity generation. Therefore, the incremental reduction in fossil fuels would be a beneficial effect of the commitment of nonrenewable resources.

Temporary and permanent commitment of water resources would occur as a result of the construction, long-term operation, and maintenance of new operations. Adoption of the Proposed Project would change the visual landscape and character of the site and surrounding area and would affect candidate, sensitive, and/or special-status species, sensitive natural communities, and wildlife access and movement. All impacts to biological resources are mitigated to a level less than significant; however, the Proposed Project would still result in significant irreversible changes to the biology of the site. Decommissioning and deconstructing project components would restore the visual character and biological resources of the area to a degree, but would not restore the landscape in its entirety to match the existing conditions prior to project construction.

8.3 Growth-Inducing Effects

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.2(d)) identify a project to be growth-inducing if it fosters economic or population growth or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Section 3.2.3 of this Program EIR specifically addresses whether the Proposed Project would induce substantial population growth in the area. The following summarizes this discussion.

The Proposed Project does not propose any residential use, included but not limited to a residential subdivision, mobile home park, or construction for a single-family residence that would cause an increase in population. The Proposed Project also does not include a 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 cause temporary increases in population.

During construction, the Proposed Project would temporarily add up to approximately 326 workers to the region. Few of these workers, if any, would relocate to the area with their families and are not expected to induce substantial population growth in the Mountain Empire and Boulevard area. Once construction is complete, the Proposed Project would add a combined total of up to 33 workers and their families to the local area. The workers and their families would likely reside across the large rural area between Campo and Jacumba. The additional workers and their families are not anticipated to result in a substantial increase in population in the area.

As discussed in Section 1.1, Project Objectives, the Proposed Project would assist in achieving the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reduction objectives by developing and constructing California RPS-qualified solar generation, approved under Senate Bill (SB) X1 2. As such, the Proposed Project would not directly induce growth related to provision of additional electric power. Rather, energy demand, as determined by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), with input from the California Energy Commission, drives generation procurement; procurement does not drive an increase in either utility customers or energy consumption. Furthermore, implementation of the Proposed Project would not permit San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) or any other investor-owned utility, to expand its service territory. For these reasons, and as further described in Section 3.2.3 of this Program EIR, the Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly induce substantial population growth.

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