

Appendix M

Agricultural Resources Review Memorandum



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services
Project Planning Division

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES REVIEW MEMO

TO: APPLICANT
FROM: NICK KOUTOUFIDIS, STAFF AGRICULTURAL SPECIALIST
SUBJECT: STARLIGHT SOLAR, PDS2022-MUP-22-010
COMMENTS – AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES
DATE: APRIL 21, 2023

Project Description

The applicant is proposing a 100 MW solar facility and would also include a 200 MW battery energy storage system (BESS). The project site encompasses a total of approximately 565 acres within the Mountain Empire Subregional Plan area in the unincorporated County. The project would be constructed in two phases, the first of 20 MW solar energy generation and 17.4 MW of battery storage and the second of 80 MW solar energy generation and 200 MW of battery storage. The project site is located south of Interstate 8 (I-8) and Old Highway 80, and east of Tierra Del Sol Road. Regional access to the project site would be provided by State Route 94 highway and I-8 freeway, respectively. Access to the project site would be provided by Jewel Valley Road and Tule Jim Lane, which each connect to Old Highway 80 in the town of Boulevard. The project is located in the Boulevard Community Planning area, with the following Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs): 612-082-12-00, 612-090-59-00, 612-090-68-00, 612-092-13-00, 612-110-02-00, 612-110-04-00, 612-110-17-00, 612-110-18-00, 612-110-19-00, 612-120-01-00, 659-020-01-00, 659-020-02-00, 659-020-05-00, 659-020-06-00, 659-020-08-00, 659-080-02-00, 659-080-09-00.

Direct Impacts

A preliminary agricultural resources review has been completed by County staff agricultural specialist based on the County of San Diego Geographic Information System (GIS), aerial imagery. The project site has been mapped by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) as “other land” (565 acres). Additionally, Prime Soils were identified to be present on the project site.

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, the Local Agricultural Resource Assessment (LARA) model has been developed to assess the relative value of agricultural resources in San Diego County. Specific documentation of the LARA model can be found in the Guidelines for Determining Significance for Agricultural Resources at <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/pds/procguid.html#Agricultural Resources>.

The site was reviewed for the following primary factors pursuant to the County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance – Agricultural Resources (Guidelines): water and climate



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services
Project Planning Division

Water

Water received a rating of low due to the site's underlying aquifer being fractured crystalline rock with a well. Please see Table 3 from the Guidelines for the project's water rating.

Table 3. Water Rating ¹

County Water Authority (CWA) Service Status	Groundwater Aquifer Type and Well Presence	Rating
Inside CWA service area with existing water infrastructure connections and a meter	Any groundwater aquifer type	High
Inside CWA service area with infrastructure connections to the site, but no meter has been installed	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer <i>and</i> has an existing well	High
	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer, but has no existing well	Moderate
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock and has an existing well	Moderate
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock, but has no existing well	Low
Outside CWA or inside CWA but infrastructure connections are not available at the site and no meter is installed	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer <i>and</i> has an existing well	Moderate
	The site is located in an Alluvial or Sedimentary Aquifer, but has no existing well	Low
	The site is located on Fractured Crystalline Rock (with or without a well)	Low
	The site is located in a Desert Basin (with or without a well)	Low

¹ If more than one underlying groundwater aquifer type exists at a site, usually the aquifer type that could produce the most water should be used to obtain the water rating. If it would be more reasonable to apply the rating based on the aquifer that would produce less water, a clear justification and reason for doing so must be provided.



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services

Project Planning Division

Climate

Climate received a rating of moderate due to the zone's temperature extremes and suitability for subtropical crops with high heat requirements. Please see the climate zone from Table 6 of the Guidelines below.

Climate (Sunset Zone) Description	Rating	Justification
Zone 13 covers low elevation desert areas (considered subtropical) and is the most extensive of the County's desert Plant climate zones. Zone 13 includes the extensive agricultural uses in the Borrego Valley.	Moderate	Zone 13 is assigned a moderate rating due to the temperature extremes characteristic of this zone. These temperature extremes exclude some of the subtropicals grown in Zones 22 to 24, however numerous subtropicals with high heat requirements thrive in this climate such as dates, grapefruit, and beaumontia and thevetia (ornamentals).

Direct Impact Conclusion

Pursuant to the Guidelines, if any of the required factors of water, climate, or soil receive a rating of "low", the site would not be considered a significant agricultural resource. Therefore, the project site is not considered a significant agricultural resource due to the site's water rating. No mitigation would be required.

Indirect Impacts

No Williamson Act Contracts, County Agricultural Preserves, exist within a mile radius of the project site. The closest Contract or Preserve is located approximately 1.1 miles southwest of the project site. Pursuant to the Guidelines, impacts related to interface conflicts would usually be less than significant if the land uses are separated by 300 feet. Therefore, no indirect impacts are expected to occur to any offsite resources, and mitigation would not be required.

Cumulative Impacts

The project would have no direct impacts and would therefore not contribute to a cumulatively significant impact. Therefore, no mitigation is required.

Summary

As indicated in this memo, no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts would occur to an important agricultural resource due to the project. Therefore, no further analysis of the project is required for agricultural resources.