SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ITEM
17.5
(ID # 4992)

FROM : TLMA-PLANNING:

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, August 29, 2017

SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCY/PLANNING: Public Hearing Item – CUP03684, PUP00916, DA00086, EIR00532 - Intent to Certify an Environmental Impact Report – Applicant: Renewable Resources Group – Representative: Power Engineers – Fourth Supervisorial District – Chuckwalla Zoning District – Palo Verde Area Plan – Agriculture (AG), Open Space: Rural (OS:RUR) – Location: northerly of Interstate 10, west of Neighbors Boulevard – Zoning: Controlled Development Areas – 10 Acre Minimum (W-2-10), Light Agriculture – 10 Acre Minimum (A-1-10) – REQUEST: Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 3684 proposes to permit a 463.5 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar power plant on approximately 50 parcels totaling approximately 3,250 gross acres. Public Use Permit (PUP) No. 916 proposes to permit the approximately 11.8 miles of transmission lines beyond the Project area that will connect the power generation to the Colorado River Substation which crosses certain County public right-of-ways. Development Agreement (DA) No. 86 proposes a development agreement with the applicant and County consistent with the County's solar plant program and grants vesting rights to develop the project in accordance with the terms of the agreement which requires certain calculation of development impact fees. [Applicant Fees 100%]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

ACTION:

Charissa Leach, Assistant TLMA Director 8/21/2017

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Perez, seconded by Supervisor Ashley and duly carried, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended to include the revised condition of approval "10. EVERY .006" regarding "Use" in the Development Agreement; and that Ordinance 664.59 is introduced with waiver of the reading; and 2017-199 was placed on the resolution in error and that 2017-168 is the correct resolution number.

Ayes:	Jeffries, Washington, Perez and Ashley
Nays:	None
Absent:	Tavaglione
Date:	August 29, 2017
xc:	Planning, Co.Co., COB

Kecia Harper-Ihem
Clerk of the Board
By: Deputy

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. **ADOPT Resolution No. 2017-168 CERTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) NO. 532**, adopting environmental findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, and adopting a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and

2. **APPROVE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 3684,** subject to the attached conditions of approval and based upon the findings and conclusions incorporated in the staff report and in Resolution No. 2017-168; and

3. **APPROVE PUBLIC USE PERMIT NO. 916,** subject to the attached conditions of approval, and based upon the findings and conclusions incorporated in the staff report and in Resolution No. 2017-168; and

4. **INTRODUCE** and **ADOPT** on successive weeks of **ORDINANCE NO. 664.59**, an Ordinance of the County of Riverside Approving Development Agreement No. 86, based upon the findings and conclusions incorporated in the staff report and in Resolution No. 2017-168.

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A
NET COUNTY COST	$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A	$ N/A
SOURCE OF FUNDS: Applicant Fees 100%			Budget Adjustment:	No
			For Fiscal Year:	N/A

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

This project is commonly referred to as the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project and is comprised of the following land use cases:

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 3684 proposes to permit a 463.5 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar power plant on approximately 50 parcels totaling approximately 3,250 gross acres. The proposed project ("Project") would consist of a solar array field utilizing single-axis solar PV trackers and panels with a combined maximum height of eight and a half feet. Supporting facilities on-site would include two electrical substations, one operation and maintenance building, inverters, transformers, and associated switchgear on the 3,250 acre area. The Project would include a new 230 kilovolt (kv) transmission (Gen-Tie) line that stretches approximately 14.5 miles in total, 11.8 miles of which would cover an additional 143.1 acres. This would connect the Project's generation to the Southern California Edison Colorado River Substation located south of Interstate 10. Since most of the site has nearly level to gently sloping topography, no mass grading would be required, and the natural drainage patterns of

the site would not be significantly altered. The Project site would be secured 24 hours per day by on-site private security personnel or remote services with motion-detection cameras. An equestrian-wire, wildlife-friendly and drainage-compatible security fence that meets the National Electrical Safety Code would be placed around the perimeter of the site. The proposed lighting for the site would be consistent with County building code. The solar array field would be located entirely within the County of Riverside's jurisdiction.

PUBLIC USE PERMIT NO. 916 proposes to permit the approximately 11.8 miles of transmission lines beyond the Project area that will connect the power generation to the Colorado River Substation which crosses certain County public rights-of-way. Approximately 4 miles of the 11.8 miles of transmission line is on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands.

DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT NO. 86: The applicant has proposed entering into a development agreement (DA No. 86) with the County for the Project that is consistent with the County's solar power plant program. Board of Supervisors Policy No. B-29 regarding solar power plants states, "[N]o approval required by Ordinance No. 348 shall be given for a solar power plant unless the Board first approves a development agreement with the solar power plant owner and the development agreement is effective." The County has reached an agreement with the applicant on the provisions of the DA. The DA has a term of 30 years and will grant the applicant vesting rights to develop the Project in accordance with the terms of the agreement. DA No. 86 contains terms consistent with Board of Supervisors Policy No. B-29, including terms regarding public benefit payments and increases (Section 4.2 of DA No. 86) and terms requiring the applicant to take actions to ensure allocation directly to the County of the sales and use taxes payable in connection with the construction of the solar power plant, to the maximum extent possible under the law (Section 4.3 of DA No.86). The DA also contains an agreement between the parties with regard to the computation of development impact fees using the surface mining fee category on a Project Area basis as set forth in Section 13 of Ordinance No. 659 (Section 4.4 and Exhibit G of DA No. 86). Approval and use of Conditional Use Permit No. 3684 and Public Use Permit No. 916 are conditioned upon DA No. 86 being entered into and effective. Per state law, a development agreement is a legislative act that must be approved by ordinance. Proposed Ordinance No. 664.59, an Ordinance of the County of Riverside Approving Development Agreement No. 86, incorporates by reference DA No. 86 consistent with Government Code section 65867.5.

The County has reviewed the Project and has determined that it is consistent with all zoning standards, the General Plan, Board of Supervisor's Policy B-29 – Solar Power Plants, and all other applicable ordinances. Additionally, the EIR has been completed in accordance with and consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

As an environmental benefit, the Project would help the State achieve its renewable energy goals and mandates. The production of renewable energy has the added benefit of reducing air quality impacts and GHG emissions that would be produced by fossil-fuel based generation facilities. The Project would be developed on contiguous and former agriculture lands to

minimize impacts to sensitive species and habitats. The Project is within close proximity to urban development within the City of Blythe, existing transmission infrastructure, and existing access roads.

The Project would also provide other important benefits to the local and regional economy from the purchase of equipment and supplies and sales tax revenue as agreed upon in the terms of Development Agreement No. 86. Additionally, the Project will result in the contribution of significant development impact fees under Ordinance No. 659 which would assure that the Project pays its fair share of capital costs of facilities, as defined in Ordnance No. 659, associated with development of the Project. Indirectly the County and region would benefit from the employment of between 200-500 daily workers during peak construction period and would provide approximately 12 permanent, full-time jobs upon operation. Other economic benefits include workers utilizing local and regional commercial services such as hotels and restaurants.

Environmental Impact Report
The public scoping period for this Project commenced on August 8, 2012, with the issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and ended on September 7, 2012. During the scoping period a public scoping meeting was conducted in the City of Blythe on August 23, 2012, and the County received input from the public on potential environmental concerns of the Project. Concerns that were expressed included:

- Aesthetics;
- Agricultural resources;
- Air quality:
- Biological resources;
- Cultural resources;
- Hazards and hazardous materials;
- Hydrology and water quality,
- Land use;
- Noise;
- Public services; and
- Traffic and circulation.

In September 2016, the Draft EIR was prepared and distributed for public review and comment. Following receipt of all comments on the Draft EIR, Response to Comments were prepared to address the comments received. The Response to Comments are included in the Final EIR.

The EIR for this Project concluded that there are no impacts that are significant and unavoidable after mitigation. Therefore, the Board of Supervisors will not be required to make a statement of overriding considerations balancing the benefits of the Project against its unavoidable environmental risks.

Impact on Residents and Businesses

All potential project impacts have been studied under CEQA and noticed to the public pursuant to the requirements of the County. As stated above, the Project would help the State achieve its renewable energy goals and mandates. The production of renewable energy has the added benefit of reducing air quality impacts and GHG emissions that would be produced by fossil-fuel based generation facilities. The Project would also provide other important benefits to the local and regional economy from the purchase of equipment and supplies and sales tax revenue as agreed upon in the terms of Development Agreement No. 86.

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Additional Fiscal Information

As stated above, the applicant and County staff have reached an agreement on the provisions of Development Agreement No. 86. Under DA No. 86, the applicant will submit annual public benefit payments of $150 per acre, increased annually by 2% from and after 2013 (currently $162 per acre in 2017), based on the solar power plant net acre amount of 2,024 acres at full build out. The total "solar power plant net acreage", agreed upon by the applicant, was calculated using the definition in Board of Supervisors' Policy No. B-29. The project is scheduled to be built in phases and the initial annual public benefit payments will be based on the solar power plant net acreage included in each phase until complete build out. DA No. 86 contemplates three phases (Section 3.4 and Exhibit F of DA No. 86). The first phase will include a solar power plant net acreage of approximately 664 acres. The second phase will include a solar power plant net acreage of approximately 967 acres. The third phase will include a solar power plant net acreage of approximately 393 acres. The applicant will also take agreed upon actions to ensure that local sales and use taxes are directly allocated to the County to the maximum extent possible under the law. Additionally, the applicant will submit an agreed upon Development Impact Fee (DIF) payment using the Palo Verde Valley surface mining fee category of $6,750 per acre on approximately 2,024 acres as set forth in Section 4.4 and Exhibit G of DA No. 86. The timing of the DIF payment will be in accordance with Ordinance No. 659 and any temporary reduction of fees approved by the board of Supervisors in place at the time of payment of the DIF shall be applicable to the project.

Staff labor and expenses to process this project are paid by the applicant; there is no General Fund obligation.

Contract History and Price Reasonableness

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

A. **Board of Supervisors Staff Report**
B. **Conditional Use Permit No. 3684 Exhibits**
C. **Draft Environmental Impact Report**
D. **Final Environmental Impact Report**
E. **Resolution No. 2017-138**

F. Ordinance No. 664.59
G. Development Agreement No. 86

Gregory P. Priamos, Director County Counsel 8/21/2017

Board of Supervisors **County of Riverside**

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-168

CERTIFYING FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT NO. 532 (SCH #2012081026), ADOPTING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS PURSUANT TO THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, ADOPTING A MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM, AND ADOPTING THE PROPOSED PROJECT

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of Government Code Section 655350 et. seq., public hearings were held before the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in Riverside California on August 29, 2017; and,

WHEREAS, all the procedures of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Riverside County Rules to Implement CEQA have been met, and Environmental Impact Report No. 532 (EIR No. 532), prepared is sufficiently detailed so that all the potentially significant effects of the Project on the environment and measures necessary to avoid or substantially lessen such effects have been evaluated in accordance with CEQA and the above referenced rules; and,

WHEREAS, the Riverside County Planning Department circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a 30-day public review period commencing on August 8, 2012.

WHEREAS, Renewable Resources Group, Inc. (the Applicant) filed an Application for Land Use and Development with the Riverside County Planning Department seeking Conditional Use Permit No. 3684 (CUP) and Public Use Permit No. 916 (PUP) and has proposed to enter into a development agreement with the County of Riverside to implement the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Energy Project (Project); and

WHEREAS, the Project consists of an up-to-450 megawatt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar energy generating facility and related infrastructure in unincorporated Riverside County, California on a combination of private lands under the jurisdiction of Riverside County. A portion of the 230 kV gen-tie line would traverse through the city of Blythe, within an area governed by the city's General Plan and through public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); and

FORM APPROVED COUNTY COUNSEL
BY: TIFFANY NORTH DATE 8/21/17

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 21067 of the Public Resources Code, and Section 15367 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15000 et seq.), the County is the lead agency for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the County solicited comments (including input about the scope and content of the environmental review, as well as potential feasible alternatives and Mitigation Measures) from responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and the public in a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR for the Project, which was filed on August 8, 2012, and circulated for a period of 30 days pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(a) and 15375; and

WHEREAS, a total of nine comment letters were received by the County in response to the August 8, 2012, NOP, which assisted the County in refining the issues and alternatives for analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Project; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21083.9 and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(c) and 15083, the County held a public scoping meeting on August 23, 2012, to solicit further input on the scope of information and analysis to be included in the DEIR; and

WHEREAS, in compliance with CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. Section 15000 et seq.), the County prepared a DEIR to analyze the potential environmental effects of the Project; and

WHEREAS, the DEIR was completed and released for public review on September 29, 2016, and the County initiated a 45-day public comment period by filing a Notice of Completion and Availability with the State Office of Planning and Research and the Riverside County Assessor-Clerk-Recorder's Office; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092, the County also provided a Notice of Availability to all organizations and individuals who had previously requested such notice, and published the Notice of Availability on September 29, 2016, in the Palo Verde Valley Times, a newspaper of general circulation in the project area; and

WHEREAS, during the 55-day comment period, the County consulted with and requested comments from responsible and trustee agencies, other regulatory agencies and other interested parties pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15086. The initial 45-day period between September 29, 2016, and November 14, 2016, was extended by 10 days in response to a request from the public; and

WHEREAS, during the official public review period for the DEIR, the County received 14 written comment letters; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092.5 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(b), the County provided each public agency that provided comments on the DEIR or Revised DEIR with written responses to the agency's comments at least 10 days before considering the Final EIR for certification, i.e., on or about August 16, 2017 and,

WHEREAS, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, the County released the Final EIR (hereinafter, the "EIR"), which consists of the DEIR, a list of all agencies and individuals who commented on the DEIR, comments received on the DEIR, and written responses to all significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation processes for the DEIR; and

WHEREAS, all potentially significant adverse environmental impacts of the Project were sufficiently analyzed in the EIR; and

WHEREAS, as contained herein, the County has endeavored in good faith to set forth the basis for its decision on the Project; and

WHEREAS, all requirements of the Public Resources Code and the CEQA Guidelines have been satisfied in the EIR, which is sufficiently detailed so that all of the potentially significant environmental effects of the Project, as well as feasible alternatives and Mitigation Measures, have been adequately evaluated; and

WHEREAS, the EIR prepared in connection with the Project sufficiently analyzes both the feasible Mitigation Measures necessary to avoid or substantially lessen the Project's potentially significant environmental impacts and a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing these effects in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, all of the findings and conclusions made by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to this Resolution are based upon the administrative record as a whole and not based solely on the specific evidence and EIR page numbers cited in this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, environmental impacts identified in the EIR that the County finds will either have no impact or will be less than significant and so do not require mitigation are described in the EIR and below in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the environmental impacts identified in the EIR as potentially significant but which the County finds can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of Mitigation Measures identified in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program are described in the EIR and below in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the project's contributions toward significant and less-than-significant cumulative environmental impacts identified are described in the EIR and in this resolution; and

WHEREAS, growth-inducing impacts identified are described in the EIR and in Section V below; and

WHEREAS, alternatives to the Project that might eliminate or reduce significant environmental impacts are described in the EIR and in Section VI below; and

WHEREAS, the County has identified the Project as the Environmentally Superior Alternative; and

WHEREAS, the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program sets forth the Mitigation Measures that the County shall require as binding obligations of the Applicant in connection with the Project, is adopted in this resolution, and is attached hereto as Exhibit "A"; and

WHEREAS, prior to taking action, the Board of Supervisors has heard, been presented with, reviewed, and considered all of the information and data in the administrative record, including the EIR, and all oral and written evidence presented to it during all meetings and hearings; and

WHEREAS, the EIR reflects the independent judgment of the Board of Supervisors and is deemed adequate for purposes of making decisions on the merits of the Project; and

WHEREAS, the County has not received any further comments or information that produced substantial new information requiring recirculation under Public Resources Code Section 21092.1 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 since the publication of the EIR; and

WHEREAS, on August 29, 2017 the Board of Supervisors conducted duly noticed public hearings on this Resolution, at which time all persons wishing to testify were heard, and the Project was fully considered; and

WHEREAS, all other legal prerequisites to the adoption of this Resolution have occurred.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, FOUND, DETERMINED, AND ORDERED by the Board of Supervisors that the following environmental impacts associated with the EIR No.532 are

determined to have no environmental impacts in consideration of existing regulations and proposed Best Management Practices.

A. Aesthetics Light and Glare

Impact: *Scenic Vistas*

Threshold: *The Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.*

1. No Impact:

The Project would not be located in a designated scenic vista and neither the Riverside County General Plan nor the Palo Verde Valley Area Plan has designated the Project area as an important visual resource. No scenic vistas were identified in the visual resources study area, therefore no impacts would occur. Impacts to views from I-10, which has been identified by the County of Riverside as eligible for designation as a scenic corridor, are addressed in Impact AES-1 (DEIR pp. 3.1-24 to 3.1-25).

Impact: *Nighttime Use of Mt. Palomar Observatory*

Threshold: *The Project would interfere with nighttime use of Mt. Palomar Observatory, as protected through Riverside County Ordinance No. 655.*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project area is located over 100 miles east of the Mt. Palomar Observatory, which far exceeds the distance to the Observatory's areas of sensitivity (Zone A at a 15-mile radius and Zone B at a 45-mile radius from the Observatory). The Project is expected to use minimal nighttime lighting during construction and operation; however, such uses would be limited and, based on the Project area's distance to the Observatory, would result in no impacts to astronomical observation and research at the Mt. Palomar Observatory (DEIR pp. 3.1-25).

B. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Impact: *Conflict with Existing Zoning of Forest Land or Timber Land*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined*

in Public Resources Code section 4526); or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51101(g)).

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)) (DEIR pp. 3.2-15).

Impact: *Result in Loss of Forest Land*

Threshold: *The Project would result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. The Project would not be located on land zoned specifically as either forest land or timberland. The Project would be located primarily on land zoned for agricultural production. Although timber production is an allowable activity within an agricultural zone, the Project would not be used for timber production, nor is the site forested. Furthermore, crops grown in the Project area are irrigated because of the arid climate. It is unlikely that the land could support 10 percent native tree cover under natural (i.e., non-irrigated) conditions. Therefore, the Project does not meet the definition of "forest land." The same land is not considered timberland because the land is not zoned Timberland Production Zone (TPZ). No impact to forest land would occur (DEIR pp. 3.2-15).

Impact: *Conflict with Land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve*

Threshold: *The Project would conflict with land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project would not conflict with land within a Riverside County Agricultural Preserve. There are no Riverside County-designated agricultural preserves in the Project area; the Project would not convert preserve lands to non-agricultural use; no impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.2-16).

C. Air Quality

Impact: *Construction of a Sensitive Receptor within One Mile of an Existing Substantial Point Source Emitter*

Threshold: *The Project would not involve the construction of a sensitive receptor located within one mile of an existing substantial point source emitter.*

1. No Impact:

The PVMSP would not establish a use classified as a sensitive receptor; as such, there would be no impact. Therefore, this criterion is not discussed in detail in the EIR (DEIR pp. 3.3-23).

D. Biological Resources

Impact: *Conflict with Habitat Conservation Plan*

Threshold: *Would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan; natural community conservation plan; or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan.*

1. No Impact:

The PVMSP is not located within areas that contain provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or State habitat conservation plan. No conservation plans (local, regional, or State) encompass the Study area; therefore, none would be impacted by the Project. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.4-35).

E. Cultural Resources

Impact: *Restrict Existing Religious or Sacred Uses*

Threshold: *The Project would not restrict religious or sacred uses within the potential impact area.*

1. No Impact:

Comment letters on the NOP from the Morongo Band of Mission Indians and the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians indicate that the Project vicinity is located within their traditional use areas. The Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians indicated in their comment letter that a village site was located nearby, and that the Project vicinity is generally sensitive to the Soboba people. However, these comment letters, the SLF search conducted by the NAHC, and the letters received from Native American groups did not indicate the presence of specific Native American sacred sites within the Project area, nor do they indicate that there are any existing religious or sacred uses within the Project area. Additionally, consultation with the local historical society did not indicate the presence of areas of known religious or sacred uses. The Project will not impact any onsite resources, and will not impact any surrounding cultural resource sites that could result in a potential cumulative impact. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated from the Project with respect to restricting existing religious or sacred uses within the Project area (DEIR pp. 3.5-29).

F. Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources

Impact: *Expose People or Structures to Landslides, Change in Topography, or Create Cut or Fill Slopes Greater Than 2:1 or Higher.*

Threshold: *Would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death, involving:*

- *Landslides.*
- *Change topography or ground surface relief features.*
- *Create cut or fill slopes greater than 2:1 or higher.*

1. No Impact:

Landslides may be induced by strong vibratory motion produced by earthquakes. Research and historical data indicate that seismically induced landslides tend to

occur in weak soil and rock on sloping terrain. Based on review of the Riverside County General Plan (RCGP) Figure S-4, the relatively gentle slopes in areas underlain by alluvium, and the dense nature of the older alluvium, the potential for seismically induced landslides and debris flows at the Project site is not considered likely. The Project would require only minor grading and would not permanently change the topography of the site or would not create cut or fill slopes greater than 2:1 or higher which could weaken the integrity of the soil and increase landslide hazards. In addition, no landslides, debris flows, or rock falls are known to be present on the site. No impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.6-14 to 3.6-15).

Impact: *Change Deposition, Siltation or Erosion That May Modify the Channel of a River or Stream or Bed of a Lake*

Threshold: *The Project would not change deposition, siltation or erosion that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of a lake.*

1. No Impact:

Project facilities and solar panels would be placed with adequate setbacks from the existing ephemeral washes that are present at the site in accordance with BMP-11. These setbacks would preserve and maintain the hydrological functions of these washes to the extent possible. As a result there would be no change in the deposition, siltation or erosion that would substantively modify the channel and there would be no impact. (DEIR pp. 3.6-15).

Impact: *Result in an increase in wind erosion and blowsand from project either on or off site.*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in an increase in wind erosion and blowsand from project either on or off site.*

1. No Impact:

During construction, the Project would implement BMPs 1 through 3 which would ensure that all earthwork activities and movement of heavy equipment is done in a manner that minimizes the ability for disturbed soils and sand to be susceptible to the

effects of wind erosion. Stockpiles would be sprayed with water, covered with tarpaulins, and/or treated with appropriate dust suppressants, especially in preparation for high wind or storm conditions. Once constructed, the site would have less exposed soil that could be susceptible to wind erosion than under existing conditions. Therefore, there would be no impact related to this criterion (see also discussion below for analysis of erosion or loss of topsoil potential from wind or water forces) (DEIR pp. 3.6-15).

Impact: *Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan; or expose people or property to hazards from proposed, existing or abandoned mines.*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan; or expose people or property to hazards from proposed, existing or abandoned mines.*

1. No Impact:

The Project site is not delineated in the Palo Verde Valley Area Plan or the RCGP as a locally important mineral resource recovery site; therefore, the loss of availability of a delineated locally important mineral resource recovery site would not occur. No impact would occur. In addition, there are no existing, planned or abandoned mines with the Project site and the Project would not be located adjacent to a State classified existing surface mines. Therefore, no impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.6-15).

Impact: *Be subject to geologic hazards, such as seiche, mudflow, or volcanic hazard.*

Threshold: *The Project would not be subject to geologic hazards, such as seiche, mudflow, or volcanic hazard.*

1. No Impact:

Seiche waves occur on enclosed or semi-enclosed bodies of water which are not present on or near the Project site. Mudflows are debris flows that have high water content and based on the flat topography of the site and surrounding area would not

be likely at the Project site. There are no volcanic hazards in the region of the Project site that could adversely affect the Project. As a result, there would be no impact (DEIR pp. 3.6-15).

G. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impact: *Conflict with Applicable Plan, Policy, or Regulation*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases.*

1. No Impact:

The PVMSP would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of GHGs. Since the proposed Project would result in a significant offset of regional air emissions associated with energy production from fossil fuels, a net reduction in GHG emissions regionally would result. The Project would serve to meet the State's goals for the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which has been identified by the State as a means of meeting the goals of AB 32 to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2030. Therefore, no impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.7-12).

H. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Impact: *Emit Hazardous Emissions or Handle Hazardous Materials*

Threshold: *The Project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.*

1. No Impact:

No schools are located within one-quarter mile of the Project area; however, the Roy Wilson Community and Child Care Center is located approximately 1.25 miles from the Project area. The Project does not include land uses that would involve the routine use, storage, or transport of hazardous materials that represent a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Construction of the Project will emit less than significant levels of toxic air contaminants and, once operational, only minor levels

of emissions would result. Therefore, the Project would not result in hazardous emissions or require the handling of hazardous materials that would adversely affect any existing schools in the site vicinity; no impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.8-24).

Impact: *Located on a Site Included on a List of Hazardous Material Sites*

Threshold: *The Project would not be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment.*

1. No Impact:

A database search was conducted for the Project and the results did not identify any hazardous materials sites in the Project area. The Project area was not identified specifically on the California Department of Toxic Substances and Control (DTSC) database. However, according to the Phase I report, the site once contained underground storage tanks (USTs) associated with the former wind turbines located on a portion of the site. The USTs were removed and no further action was required by the overseeing agency, the RWQCB (Kennedy Jenks, 2012). As listed in Table 3.8-1, a total of four cases were identified within one mile of the Project area, of which two are registered underground storage tanks and two are land disposal sites which would not be considered likely to adversely affect the Project site. Therefore, no impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.8-24).

Impact: *Located within the Vicinity of a Private Airstrip*

Threshold: *The Project would not be located within the vicinity of a private airstrip, and would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area*

1. No Impact:

The Project would not be within the vicinity of a private airstrip and therefore would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project area. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.8-24).

Impact: *Result in an Inconsistency with an Airport Master Plan*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in an inconsistency with an Airport Master Plan*

1. No Impact:

In October 2012, the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) found the Project to be consistent with the Riverside County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (RCALUCP). No impact would occur (See Appendix K) (DEIR pp. 3.8-25).

I. Hydrology and Water Quality

Impact: *Place Housing Within a 100-year Flood Hazard Area*

Threshold: *The Project would not place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map.*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project would not include the construction of any residential units, and would not introduce new housing to the area; therefore, no impact would occur to housing placed within a 100-year flood hazard area (DEIR pp. 3.9-16).

Impact: *At Risk of Inundation by Seiche, Tsunami, or Mudflow*

Threshold: *The Project would not be at risk of inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.*

1. No Impact:

The Project would not be in a location that could be affected by a tsunami or seiche. The Project would be in an area characterized by well-drained soils and low precipitation and would not be within a State of California Earthquake Fault Zone for known active faults, and no known or potentially active faults are mapped within the vicinity of the Project area (the nearest active fault is approximately 60 miles away). The Project would not be affected by or result in a mudflow; no impact would occur (DEIR, pp. 3.9-16 to 3.9-17).

Impact: *Include New or Retro-Fitted Stormwater Treatment Control BMPs*

Threshold: *The Project would not include new or retrofitted Stormwater Treatment Control BMPs (e.g., water quality treatment basins, constructed treatment wetlands), the operation*

of which could result in significant environmental effects (i.e., increased vectors and/or odors)

1. No Impact:

The Project would not include new or retrofitted stormwater treatment control BMPs, including those mentioned above; therefore, no impact resulting from their use would occur (DEIR pp. 3.9-17).

J. Land Use and Planning

Impact: *Physically Divide an Established Community*

Threshold: *The Project would not physically divide an established community.*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project is located in a remote area with very few residences (six residences are within 1,000 feet and over 200 residences within one mile). The closest residential community is the Nicholls Warm Springs/Mesa Verde neighborhood. Due to the remote location of the proposed Project, the solar facility would not physically divide an established community, nor would the gen-tie line, access roads, and 34.5 kV distribution line. No impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.10-17).

Impact: *Conflict with Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.*

1. No Impact:

The Project would not be within the jurisdiction of any adopted habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan; therefore, no impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.10-17).

Impact: *Incompatible with Existing Surrounding Zoning*

Threshold: *The Project would not be incompatible with existing surrounding zoning.*

1. No Impact:

The zoning surrounding the Project is similar to that of the Project area; therefore, the Project would be compatible with existing surrounding zoning. These similar surrounding uses include the Blythe Energy Center, Blythe Solar Project (owned by NRG), Blythe Substation, and electrical transmission lines. No impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.10-17).

Impact: *Disrupt or Divide the Physical Arrangement of an Established Community*

Threshold: *The Project would not disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community (including a low-income or minority community).*

1. No Impact:

The Project is located in a remote area of unincorporated Riverside County and would not disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community. No impacts would occur (DEIR pp. 3.10-17).

K. Population and Housing

Impact: *Displace Substantial Number of Existing Housing*

Threshold: *The Project would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.*

The Project would create a demand for additional housing, particularly housing affordable to households earning 80% or less of the County's median income.

1. No Impact:

The Project area and gen-tie corridor do not contain residential housing. Due to the temporary nature of Project construction activities, it is unlikely that construction workers would permanently relocate closer to the Project area with their families. Operation of the Project would require a nominal workforce and is not anticipated to increase the local population. Therefore, the Project would not create a demand for additional housing. Therefore, the proposed Project would not displace existing housing or necessitate the need for construction of replacement housing elsewhere. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.13-11).

Impact: *Displace Substantial Numbers of People*

Threshold: *The Project would not displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project does not contain a residential component, nor would it displace existing housing or people. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.13-11).

Impact: *Affect a County Redevelopment Project Area*

Threshold: *The Project would not affect a County Redevelopment Project Area.*

1. No Impact:

The Project area and immediate vicinity would not be within a County Redevelopment Project Area. No impact would occur. (DEIR pp. 3.13-11)

L. Public Services and Utilities

Impact: *Exceed Wastewater Treatment Requirements, Require Construction of New Water or Wastewater Treatment Facilities, and Result in Determination by Wastewater Treatment Provider that Project has Adequate Capacity*

Threshold: *The Project would not:*

- *Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board.*
- *Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects.*
- *Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments.*

1. No Impact:

The O&M buildings would generate a minimum volume of wastewater as result of daily activities once operational. Wastewater would be treated via a septic system permitted through the Riverside County Department of Environmental Health

Services, and would be in compliance with Department requirements. The Project would not require construction or expansion of public water treatment and/or service systems. Restroom facilities during Project construction and decommissioning would be provided by portable units to be serviced by licensed providers. The Project would not exceed wastewater treatment requirements during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning because the Project would not be connected to a public sewer system. No impact would occur with respect to any of these considerations. (DEIR pp. 3.14-14)

Impact: *Require the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing facilities; the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects*

Threshold: *Would not result in construction of new facilities or the expansion of the existing following facilities:*

- Electricity;
- Natural gas;
- Communications systems;
- Storm water drainage;
- Street lighting;
- Maintenance of public facilities, including roads; or
- Other governmental services.

1. No Impact:

   The Project would generate renewable energy that would have an overall beneficial effect on the electricity supply. The Project would not use any sources of natural gas. The Project would not require expansion of existing or new street lighting, storm water drainage (see Section 3.9, *Hydrology and Water Quality*) or other public facilities including roads (see Section 3.16, *Traffic and Transportation*). Therefore there would be no impact relating to the types of facilities listed above. (DEIR pp. 3.14-14 to 3.14-15)

Impact: *Conflict with any adopted energy conservation plans.*

Threshold: *Would not conflict with any adopted energy conservation plans.*

1. No Impact:

As discussed in Section 4.4, *Energy Consumption*, the Project would produce enough energy to power approximately 180,000 households and progress the goals of the California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and other similar renewable programs in the state. The Project operation would have an overall beneficial effect on the electricity supply to the grid and would help decrease reliance on coal power. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with adopted energy conservation plans. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.14-14 to 3.14-15).

M. Recreation

Impact: *Recreational Facilities*

Threshold: *The Project would not:*

- *Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.*
- *Located within a CSA or recreation and park district with a Community Parks and Recreation Plan (Quimby fees).*

1. No Impact:

The proposed Project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. The proposed Project would be located in unincorporated Riverside County and would not be located within a CSA or recreation and park district with a Community Parks and Recreation Plan. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.15-22).

N. Transportation and Traffic

Impact: *Alter Waterborne Traffic*

Threshold: *The Project would not alter waterborne traffic.*

1. No Impact:

There is no waterborne traffic in the vicinity of the Project. The Project would not utilize waterborne traffic to transport materials or the workforce; no impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.16-14).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors that the following environmental impacts associated with the EIR No. 532 are determined to be less than significant in consideration of existing regulations and proposed Best Management Practices.

A. Aesthetics Light and Glare

***Impact**: Effect upon Scenic Resources*

***Threshold:** The Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.*

1. Project Impact(s):

In summary, construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the Project would not strongly increase the visual contrast of the area and would not substantially degrade the existing previously disturbed and human-made visual character along I-10. Additionally, the Project would be consistent with visual policies contained in the Riverside County General Plan, the Palo Verde Valley Area Plan, and the City of Blythe General Plan 2025, which contain policies to protect the scenic quality of views from designated and eligible scenic highways. There are no scenic resources such as significant trees, rocks, historic buildings, or prominent topographic features that would be degraded as a result of the Project. Therefore, no substantial adverse effects to scenic resources would occur, and impacts during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning would be less than significant (DEIR, pp. 3.1-34 to 3.1-35).

***Impact**: Degrade the Existing Visual Character or Quality of the Site and its Surroundings*

***Threshold:** The Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Although the Project would change the existing visual character of the site from agriculture to a solar energy facility, it would not alter the site in a manner that would substantially degrade its scenic value, which is considered low. The proposed solar facility would be located in a sparsely populated area with no unique or outstanding visual features. Therefore, less-than-significant impacts would occur with regard to degrading the existing visual character or quality of the site as a result of the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the Project (DEIR, pp. 3.1-34 to 3.1-35).

***Impact**: Effects of New Sources of Light and Glare on Nighttime Views*

***Threshold:** The Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Construction of the Project generally would occur during the daytime hours and could occur as late as 7:00 p.m. in order to meet the construction schedule. No overnight construction would occur. In the event that work is performed at a time before 7:00 p.m. that requires supplemental lighting, the construction crew would use only the minimum illumination needed to perform the work safely. All lighting would be directed downward and shielded to focus illumination on the desired work areas only, and to prevent light spillage onto adjacent properties. With the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and because lighting would be shielded and focused downward and lighting used to illuminate work areas would be turned off by 7:00 p.m., light or glare created by construction lighting would be minimal and would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. Similarly, the solar facility and security lighting would be designed to provide minimum illumination needed to achieve safety and security objectives and would be directed downward and shielded to focus illumination on the desired areas only and avoid light trespass into adjacent

area. No impacts would occur with regard to ground-based viewers or residences as the closest receptors would be farther than 500 feet from the closest source of glare. Therefore, the solar array would not create substantial glint or glare during normal operations that would be visible from sensitive viewpoints, including residences with views of the Project, I-10, and recreational facilities; no adverse impacts to sensitive viewpoints related to glare would result from the Project. As part of the Project, BMP-11 (Project structures and building surfaces) would minimize the potential for glare from any structure or building surfaces, resulting in a less than significant impact (DEIR pp. 3.1-39 to 3.1-41).

***Impact**: Create an Aesthetically Offensive Site Open to Public View*

***Threshold:** The Project would not result in the creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Construction of the Project would change the existing visual character of the site due to the presence of equipment, materials, and workers. However, these short-term impacts would occur only throughout the construction period and BMPs would reduce potential impacts to visual resources. Operation and maintenance of the Project would change the existing visual character of the site from agriculture to a solar energy facility area and periodically could result in the presence of workers or maintenance vehicles. However, the Project area is considered to have low scenic value and already is influenced by the presence, operation, and maintenance of nearby existing electrical facilities. Therefore, overall visual impacts of the Project would not result in an aesthetically offensive site to public viewers and impacts would be less than significant (DEIR, pp. 3.1-41 to 3.1-42).

***Impact**: Expose Residential Properties to Unacceptable Light Levels*

***Threshold:** The Project would not expose residential property to unacceptable light levels.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would be visible from residences on the Palo Verde valley floor below the Mesa Bluffs. The nearest residence is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the Project site and views from it are represented in KOP 1. However, construction of the Project generally would occur during daytime hours and no overnight construction would occur. In the event that work performed prior to 7:00 p.m. requires supplemental light, the construction crew would use only the minimum illumination necessary to perform the work safely. Further, Project facility and security lighting would be designed to provide the minimum illumination needed to achieve safety and security objectives and would be directed downward and shielded to focus illumination on the desired areas only and avoid light trespass into adjacent areas. Implementation of BMP-6 (Lighting Plan) would further minimize any visual impacts resulting from light. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR, pp. 3.1-42 to 3.1-43).

B. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Impact: *Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use, or a Williamson Act Contract*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Palo Verde Valley Area Plan applies an agricultural land use designation to the proposed solar facility site, with parcels currently zoned W-2-10 (Controlled Development Areas [10 Acre Min.]) and A-1-10 (Light Agriculture). The Palo Verde Valley Area Plan applies an Agricultural land use designation to private parcels crossed by the gen-tie corridor, with parcels zoned as W-2-5 (Controlled Development Areas [5-Acre Min.]), W-2-10 (Controlled Development Areas [10-Acre Min.]), and A-1-10 (Light Agriculture). Within the city of Blythe, the proposed gen-tie line would traverse private parcels zoned Agriculture and Service Industrial. On BLM-managed lands, the gen-tie line would be located within California Desert

Conservation Act (CDCA) Plan-designated utility corridors, which are not zoned for agriculture. The solar facility site is not under a Williamson Act contract or part of a Riverside County agricultural preserve, nor would the gen-tie line traverse lands under a Williamson Act contract or lands that are part of a Riverside County agricultural preserve.

With implementation of the Project, land zoned for agricultural uses would be utilized for solar power generation for a term of 30 years during the life of the Project. However, with the issuance of a CUP for the Project, the solar facility and gen-tie line would be allowed uses within Agricultural zones and would be consistent with that existing zoning. Implementation of the PVMSP would not conflict with existing zoning. As such, with the current zoning or under a new zoning district, impacts would be less than significant during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning (DEIR, pp. 3.2-17).

Impact: *Conflict with Existing Zoning for, or Cause Rezoning of, Forest Land, Timberland, or Timberland Zoned Timberland Production*

Threshold: *The Project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or forestland to non-forest use.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Project site does not contain any forest land as defined by Public Resources Code Section 12220(g), timberland as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526, or land zoned Timberland Production as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g). The Project would not conflict with these zoning types or cause rezoning of these lands. No impact would occur (DEIR, pp. 3.2-18 to 3.2-19).

Impact: *Loss of Forest Land or Conversion of Forest Land to Non-Forest Use*

Threshold: *The Project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or forestland to non-forest use.*

1. Project Impact(s):

As no forest land is present on the Project site, the Project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. No impact would occur (DEIR pp. 3.2-18 to 3.2-19).

Impact: *Indirect Conversion of Farmland or Forest Land*

Threshold: *The Project would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use or forestland to non-forest use.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The temporary removal of this property from agricultural use would not increase the total acreage of urban uses. This property would be available for reversion to agricultural use when the Project is decommissioned. The Project would not involve other changes in the existing environment that may result in the conversion of other agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, the Project would result in less-than-significant impacts involving other changes in the existing environment (DEIR, pp. 3.2-19 to 3.2-19).

Impact: *Cause Development of Non-Agricultural Uses within 300 Feet of Agriculturally Zoned Property*

Threshold: *The Project would not cause development of non-agricultural uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property (Ordinance No. 625, "Right-to-Farm").*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would cause development of non-agricultural uses within 300 feet of agriculturally zoned property, but would not create significant incompatibility impacts. The proposed renewable energy Project would be allowed as a conditional use on County lands zoned for agriculture. The Project would not create use conflicts with agricultural use or otherwise interfere with use of agriculturally zoned property adjacent to the Project area. It would not lead to a determination that existing uses

would be deemed a nuisance. Accordingly, the impact would be less than significant (DEIR, pp. 3.2-19).

C. **Air Quality**

Impact: *Conflict With or Obstruct Implementation of the Applicable Air Quality Plan*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Project-related construction and operational emissions would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan since the Project would comply with the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) Rules and Regulations, including those adopted from the State Implementation Plan (SIP) and those required under MDAQMD Rule 403 relative to fugitive dust. Impacts would be less than significant. Decommissioning emissions would be similar to construction emissions and also would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-23 to 3.3-24).

Impact: *Exposure of Sensitive Receptors to Substantial Pollutant Concentrations*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The MDAQMD CEQA guidelines specify that industrial projects within 1,000 feet of existing or planned sensitive receptor land uses, including residences, must be evaluated for this criterion. There are no sensitive receptors within 1,000 feet of the Project site, nor does the Project involve construction of sensitive receptor land uses. Construction of the Project would not emit a significant amount of emissions, and once operational, any emissions would be minimal. Therefore the Project would result in a less than significant impact (DEIR pp. 3.3-28).

Impact: *Violate Any Air Quality Standard or Contribute Substantially To an Existing or Projected Air Quality Violation When Added to the Local Background*

Threshold: *The Project would not violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation when added to the local background.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would not violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation. Emissions from construction of Project components would be below the impact significance thresholds for the maximum daily construction for all the criteria pollutants. In addition, the annual emissions would be below the impact thresholds for all the criteria pollutants. Operational emissions of toxic air contaminates would be negligible due to the limited activity and relatively infrequent need for heavy maintenance equipment on-site. Therefore, the risk from operations at any given receptor area would be below the MDAQMD significance thresholds. Since decommissioning would not involve grading or clearing activities and equipment used in the future is likely to be much more efficient than that currently used, the level of decommissioning emissions would be substantially less than emissions created during construction. Decommissioning activities would be conducted pursuant to adopted MDAQMD emission control measures in effect at the time of the activity. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-24 to 3.3-27).

Impact: *Result in Cumulatively Considerable Net Increase of Any Criteria Pollutant*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including release emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors).*

1. Project Impact(s):

While the region is nonattainment for the CAAQS for O_3 and PM_{10}, not all emissions of these criteria pollutants would constitute a significant impact or cumulatively considerable net increase in emissions. During construction, the Project's emissions

of non-attainment pollutants ROG, NOx, and PM_{10} would represent only a very small percentage of the overall emissions budget and would fall below the thresholds the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) has established to ensure its ability to bring the air basin into compliance. Less than significant emissions would occur during operations, and the Project would also provide renewable energy, which would reduce emissions associated with power generation compared to fossil fuel power generation. The PVMSP would not result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the Project region is non-attainment. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-27 to 3.3-28).

Impact: *Exposure of Sensitive Receptors to Odorous Emissions*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people. The exhaust from construction equipment and use of building materials such as asphalt paving, adhesives and binders, and protective coatings may create mild odors in areas on and adjacent to the Project area (within 1,000 feet). Construction odors would be temporary and not overly offensive. Due to the sparse population adjacent to the site, these mild odors would not affect a substantial number of people. In regard to Project operation, equipment and other Project activities would not include significant odor-producing sources. Few odor sources would be activated during decommissioning. Thus, impacts would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning, and therefore would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-28).

Impact: *Exposure of Sensitive Receptors to Odorous Emissions*

Threshold: *The Project would not create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project could create mild odors in areas on and adjacent to the Project site due to exhaust from construction equipment and use of building materials such as asphalt paving, adhesives and binders, and protective coatings. Construction odors would be temporary and not overly offensive. Due to the sparse population adjacent to the site, these mild odors would not affect a substantial number of people. In regard to Project operation, equipment and other Project activities would not include significant odor-producing sources. Few odor sources would be activated during decommissioning. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-28 to 3.3-29).

Impact: *Expose Sensitive Receptors Located Within 1 Mile of the Project Site to Substantial Point Source Emissions*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose sensitive receptors that are located within one mile of the Project site to substantial point source emissions.*

1. Project Impact(s):

As discussed above in Impact AIR-4, the Project would not expose sensitive receptors within 1 mile of the Project site to substantial point source emissions. The impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.3-29).

D. Biological Resources

Impact: *Riparian Habitat or Other Sensitive Natural Community Identified in Local or Regional Plans*

Threshold: *The Project would not effect on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by CDFW or USFWS.*

1. Project Impact(s):

A total of 182.6 acres of disturbed and undisturbed desert riparian woodland wash community occurs within the proposed solar facility site, and 22.9 acres of desert

riparian woodland wash are within the proposed gen-tie 500-foot survey buffer. Implementation of BMP-11, with the exception of Pole 43, would ensure that Project facilities would be sited to ensure there is adequate space between solar facilities and natural washes, thereby avoiding impacts to desert riparian woodland wash community. Construction of Pole 43 would require a temporary disturbance area of 100 feet by 100 feet (0.023 acre) and a permanent 10-foot by 10-foot disturbance area (0.002 acre) would be required for the pole foundation. However, impacts would be minimized through implementation of BMP-13, which includes brush beating, moving, or use of protective surface matting rather than removing vegetation and restoration of exposed soils to their original contour and vegetation. Impacts to this sensitive vegetation community would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.4-46 to 3.4-37).

Impact: *Native or Resident Migratory Fish or Wildlife Species, Corridors, or Nursery Sites*

Threshold: *The Project would not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.*

1. Project Impact(s):

There are no perennial water features on the solar facility site and no corridors for aquatic species movement. No nursery sites have been identified on or in the vicinity of the solar facility site, nor is the Project site located within a known wildlife migration corridor or linkage connecting large open space areas. Therefore, implementation of the Project, including its fencing, would not substantially restrict wildlife movement or interfere with any nursery sites. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.4-48).

E. Geology, Soils and Mineral Resources

Impact: *Risk of Loss due to Rupture of a Known Earthquake Fault*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death, involving rupture of a known earthquake fault.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project is located within a seismically active area. However, the closest active fault to the Project site is the Brawley Seismic Zone, approximately 60 miles from the Project area. The Project area is not located within a known Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone, and there are no known active or potentially active faults that intersect the Project area. Therefore, the potential for surface ground rupture and lurching or cracking of the ground surface at the solar facility and gen-tie lines is considered very low. In addition, the Project will not cause or exacerbate any potential for rupture. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.6-16).

Impact: *Loss of Availability of a Known Mineral Resource that would be of Value to the Region or State*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project site is not located within the Palo Verde Area Plan or the Riverside County General Plan as a locally important mineral resource recovery site, nor is the Project site used for mineral production, or under claim, lease, or permit for the production of locatable, leasable, or salable minerals or mineral materials. The Project would be located within the State of California-designated Mineral Resources Zone (MRZ) Classification of MRZ-4, which is defined as an area where there is not enough information available to determine the presence or absence of mineral deposits; therefore, the Project would not result in the loss of the availability of a known mineral resource classified by the State. As there is no information to indicate that the sand and gravel located on the site is of unique or higher quality value than

other similar deposits in eastern Riverside County, impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.6-21 to 3.6-22).

F. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Impact: *Greenhouse Gas Emissions That May Have a Significant Impact on the Environment*

Threshold: *The Project would not generate greenhouse gas emissions that may have a significant impact on the environment.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The main source of GHG emissions associated with the Project would be combustion of fossil fuels during construction. To ensure that the construction emissions of this Project would not constitute a significant impact, the total construction emissions were amortized over the life of the Project and measured against the MDAQMD threshold. Amortization of the construction emissions over the assumed 30-year life of the Project would result in a contribution of about 153 metric tons of CO_2e per year. GHG emissions due to construction would not represent a substantial source of GHG emissions and would be substantially less than the MDAQMD-recommended threshold of 100,000 metric tons per year of CO_2e. Emissions associated with operations are estimated to be 98 metric tons per year of CO_2e, which is substantially less than the MDAQMD-recommended threshold of 100,000 metric tons per year of CO_2e. Therefore, operational emissions would not exceed the GHG significance threshold during Project operations. Decommissioning of the Project would require removal of the solar equipment and facilities (including gen-tie structures) and transportation of all components off-site. Equipment used for decommissioning generally would be similar to that used for construction, although the overall short-term GHG emissions during decommissioning would be much less in comparison to construction GHG emissions. According to the County of Riverside Climate Action Plan (CAP), in order to reach the reduction target, Riverside County must offset this growth in emissions and reduced community-wide emissions to 5,960,998 MT CO2e

by the year 2020. The Project would result in a net GHG displacement through the replacement of fossil-fuel generated electricity with solar electricity from 450,454 to 1,287,763 metric tons of CO_2e. Operation of the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project would therefore result in a substantial net reduction (displacement) in GHG emissions in the region with the implementation of the Project's solar facility, when compared to a conventional fossil-fuel combustion power plant. Conservatively, it is estimated that the annual GHG emissions for decommissioning would be equal to the construction GHG emissions. Adding the construction, operations, and decommissioning GHG emissions, amortized over the life of the Project (30 years), the total GHG emissions from the Project are estimated to be approximately 404 metric tons of CO_2e annually, which remains substantially less than the MDAQMD-recommended threshold of 100,000 metric tons per year of CO_2e. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp.3.7-12 to 3.7-14).

G. <u>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</u>

Impact: *Create a Significant Hazard through Reasonably Foreseeable Upset and Accident Conditions Involving the Release of Hazardous Materials*

Threshold: *The Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment.*

1. <u>Project Impact(s)</u>:

Potential impacts that may result from construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the Project could include the accidental release of hazardous materials such a fuels, oils, lubricants, and solvents, if not managed properly. However, as required by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Construction Permit, construction and decommissioning activities would be required to adhere to a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan which would include BMPs for the safe handling and storage of hazardous materials during construction. The Project also would implement BMPs during operation and adhere

to city, state, and federal regulations, which would avoid or minimize the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, the Project would result in a less-than-significant impact regarding creation of a hazard to the public or the environment (DEIR 3.8-30).

Impact: *Adopted Emergency Response/Evacuation Plan*

Threshold: *The Project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project site is located in a remote area with alternative access roads that would allow vehicles and personnel onto the site in the event of an emergency. Access would be maintained throughout construction, and appropriate detours would be provided in the event of potential road closures. The solar arrays would be surrounded by fencing and dirt access roads, approximately 12 feet wide, which would be constructed every 200 to 400 feet (approximately). Emergency access would remain available through the end of decommissioning. Therefore, the Project would result in less-than-significant impacts related to impairment of the implementation of or physical interference with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan (DEIR pp. 3.8-34).

H. Hydrology and Water Quality

Impact: *Deplete Groundwater Supplies*

Threshold: *The Project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Project construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning would not involve the use of groundwater pumped from existing wells on-site. Construction water would be used for dust suppression, concrete manufacturing, fire safety, and the implementation of Mitigation Measures. In addition, construction of the new

substations and operation and maintenance buildings would introduce a new but small area of impermeable surfaces that would potentially interfere with groundwater recharge within the groundwater basin. During operation, the Project would require a limited amount of water for washing of the solar panels, fire water supply, vegetation maintenance, and supply for the operations and maintenance buildings. Approximately 302 acre-feet per year (ac-ft/yr) of water, which corresponds to an average flow rate of about 187 gallons per minute, would be used for operation and maintenance activities, including twice-yearly cleaning of the solar arrays. All of this demand would be met with non-potable supplies, except for potable water for the operations and maintenance building, which would amount to a few thousand gallons per day. Construction and operation of the Project would create a new but small area of impermeable surfaces (nominal compared to the overall solar facility surface area) that could theoretically interfere with groundwater recharge. The very small area that would become impermeable would not significantly interfere with groundwater recharge. The Project would reduce infiltration to the groundwater basin from agricultural irrigation recharge in the amount of 72 ac-ft/yr. However, this would be more than offset by the Project's 2,903 ac-ft/yr (POWER, 2012) reduction of on-site water demand for irrigation from the existing agricultural uses. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.9-19 to 3.9-20).

Impact: *Risk of Loss Due to Flooding*

Threshold: *The project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would not involve working in the vicinity of a levee of dam, nor would the Project be located such that it would expose people or structures to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding. With the exception of Pole 43, Project facilities would be sited with adequate space between solar facilities and

natural washes (BMP-11) to preserve and maintain natural washes' hydrological functions. Pole 43 would not be a habitable structure and would be designed to withstand potential flood hazards. The Project will not cause or exacerbate any potential for flooding. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.9-24).

I. Land Use and Planning

Impact: *Conflict with Applicable Land Use Plan, Policy, or Regulation*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with applicable land use plans, policies, or regulations of agencies with jurisdiction over the Project adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project site is located within the W-2-10 (Controlled Development Areas [10 Acre Min.]) and A-1-10 (Light Agriculture) zoning designations. With the approval of a Conditional Use Permit, the Project would be consistent with the W-2-10 (solar facility and gen-tie line), and A-1-10 (solar facility and gen-tie line) zones, as well as the Agriculture (AG), Estate Density Residential-Rural Community (EDR-RC), and Open Space Rural (OS-RUR) land use designations. Further, the Project site is located within the Riverside Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan and Blythe Municipal Airport's Airport Influence Area, and would adhere to the Federal Aviation Administration Part 77 Review. The proposed gen-tie line would be consistent with the provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, which encourages use of an existing right-of-way when practical. To the extent these plans and regulations are intended to protect environmental resources, including agricultural resources, open space resources and airport safety, the Project would not cause any impacts because the Project does not conflict with those plans and regulations. The Project also would be consistent with the plans, policies and regulations of the CDCA Plan and the Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert (NECO) Coordinated Management Plan. Therefore, the Project would not conflict

with applicable federal land use plans or policies. Accordingly, this impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.10-18 to 3.10-23).

Impact: *Substantial Alteration of Present or Planned Land Use of an Area*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in a substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would be located on private lands and would be consistent with the Riverside County General Plan and Palo Verde Valley Area Plan with issuance of a CUP; it also would be consistent with the City of Blythe General Plan 2025. Additionally, the portions of the gen-tie line located on BLM-managed lands would be located within a portion of the Riverside East SEZ and a designated utility corridor. Therefore, construction of the gen-tie line would be consistent with the BLM's CDCA Plan and NECO Plan. To the extent these plans and regulations are intended to protect environmental resources, the Project would not cause any significant impacts because the Project does not conflict with those plans and regulations. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with present and planned land use of the area and impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.10-23).

Impact: *Affect Land Use within a City Sphere of Influence or Within Adjacent City or County Boundaries*

Threshold: *The Project would not affect land use within a city sphere of influence and/or within adjacent city or county boundaries.*

1. Project Impact(s):

A portion of the Project's gen-tie line would be located within the City of Blythe's sphere of influence. The Project would be consistent with the City of Blythe General Plan with issuance of a use permit. To the extent these plans and regulations are intended to protect environmental resources, the Project would not cause any significant impacts because the Project does not conflict with those plans and

regulations. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant to the City's sphere of influence (DEIR pp. 3.10-23).

Impact: *Consistent with Existing or Proposed Zoning*

Threshold: *The Project would be consistent with the site's existing or proposed zoning.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The proposed solar facility and portions of the gen-tie line located on private lands would be consistent with the existing zoning for the Riverside County General Plan and Palo Verde Valley Area Plan, since the use is allowed with a CUP. The gen-tie line would be located on land under the management of BLM and would be consistent with the CDCA Plan and the NECO Plan. To the extent these plans and regulations are intended to protect environmental resources, the Project would not cause any significant impacts because the Project does not conflict with those plans and regulations. Therefore, the Project would be consistent with the site's existing zoning. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.10-23 to 3.10-24).

J. Noise

Impact: *Excessive Ground-Borne Vibration and Noise*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose persons to or generate excessive ground-borne vibration or ground-borne noise levels.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Temporary sources of ground-borne vibration and noise during construction and decommissioning would result from operation of conventional heavy construction equipment such as the vibratory post driver, graders, bulldozers, and loaded haul trucks. However, vibration levels at the closest residences would be well below the peak particle velocity (PPV) thresholds. Operation and maintenance would not introduce any new sources of perceivable ground-borne vibration to the area surrounding the Project. Therefore, the Project would result in less-than-significant impacts with regard to ground-borne vibration and noise (DEIR pp. 3.11-21 to 3.11-22).

Impact: *Permanent Increase in Ambient Noise Levels in the Project Vicinity*

Threshold: *The Project would not create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the Project vicinity above levels existing without the Project.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would generate noise associated with the operation and maintenance of the tracker unit motors, substation transformers, modular power block inverters, medium voltage transfers, transmission line corona discharge, and maintenance activities. As noise attenuates with distance, the Project would not result in a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the Project vicinity above levels existing without the Project. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.11-23).

Impact: *Railroad or Highway Noise*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in impacts from railroad or highway noise.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would not utilize railroad service for delivery of materials or workers; therefore, no impacts related to railroad noise would occur from the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the Project. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.11-23).

K. Population and Housing

Impact: *Directly or Indirectly Induce Substantial Population Growth*

Threshold: *The Project would not induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly or indirectly.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The majority of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning workforce is expected to come from the existing labor pool in eastern Riverside County and Imperial County, California, and from La Paz County, Arizona. Due to the temporary nature of construction work, workers are not expected to relocate permanently to the local area in order to build the Project. Permanent employees, if

recruited from areas outside the Blythe area, may choose to relocate to the area. There is a sufficient supply of housing either for sale or rent to accommodate those workers. Operation of the Project would require a nominal workforce, approximately 12 permanent full-time employees, and is not anticipated to increase the local population substantially. Further, the increase of 12 permanent full-time employees would be included as part of the County's 2050 population projection of 3,480,980 people, and would not induce substantial population growth or create a demand for additional housing. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.13-11 to 3.13-13).

L. Public Services and Utilities

Impact: *New or Physically Altered Schools, Police and Sherriff Protection, and Fire Protection Facilities*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities; and/or result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for public services.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Construction of the Project temporarily could affect the demand for public services due to the increased population and traffic associated with construction worker vehicle trips, which could create the need for expansion of or additional governmental facilities. However, it is anticipated that the construction workforce would be drawn from communities within Riverside County, with a smaller portion drawn from Imperial County and La Paz County and would not induce permanent growth to the regional population levels. Impacts would be less than significant.

As there would be sufficient vacant housing units located within local communities to support the number of construction workers, the Project would not trigger the need for new housing. Therefore, the Project would not induce substantial population

growth to the regional population levels, and would not be anticipated to increase school enrollment sufficiently to require new schools to be constructed or existing schools to be physically altered. Further, the Project would not result in the need for construction of new school facilities or physically altered school facilities during operation and maintenance, as the Palo Verde Unified School District is not currently at enrollment capacity. Impacts would be less than significant.

Construction of the Project temporarily could increase demands on police services. However, on-site security would include trained, uniformed, and unarmed personnel whose primary responsibility would be to control ingress and egress of personnel and vehicles, perform fire and security watch during off hours, and perform security badge administration, which would minimize the potential need for assistance from the Blythe Police Department and Riverside County Sherriff's Department. Because Project construction is not anticipated to permanently increase the local population, no new or expanded law enforcement facilities or increased staff levels within the Project's regional or local study area would be required. Once operational, the Project site would include security fencing, controlled access gates, and security lighting, which would minimize the potential need for the City of Blythe Police Department's and the Riverside County Sheriff Department's assistance. As previously described, operation and maintenance of the Project would not increase the local population or require the need for new or expanded law enforcement facilities or staff levels within the Project's regional or local study areas. Impacts would be less than significant.

During construction of the Project, there would be the potential for both small fires and major structural fires. Electrical sparks, combustion of fuel oil, hydraulic fluid, mineral oil, or insulating fluid at substations, or flammable liquids, explosions, and over-heated equipment may cause small fires. The Project would result in an increase in demand for fire protection services over existing levels during construction. The Project would not cause population growth sufficient to generate a need for new or

expanded fire protection facilities. Implementation of BMP-4, a Fire Management and Protection Plan, would be developed to identify potential hazards and accident scenarios that would exist at the facility during construction. Further, the Applicant would be required to pay a development impact fee for fire services, pursuant Riverside County Ordinance No. 659.

During operation and maintenance of the Project, there would be the potential for both small fires and major structural fires. The O&M buildings would include their own emergency power, fire suppression, and potable water systems. As part of the Project, implementation of BMP-4, Fire Management and Protection Plan, would ensure that emergency fire precautions are employed during Project operation and maintenance. The Project would include emergency access and other safety features and plans for fire protection. Implementation of BMP-4, Fire Management and Protection Plan, would ensure that notification procedures and emergency fire precautions are employed so that operation of the Project does not inhibit the ability of fire protection or emergency medical personnel to respond to the Project area and vicinity. No new or physically altered public facilities would be needed to address such fires. Impacts would be less than significant during Project construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning.

As discussed above, the Project's construction workforce would be hired from the available regional workforce. There could be temporary in-migration that would increase the local population during construction; however, it would not warrant the need for new or expanded parks and recreational facilities within the Project's regional or local study area. During operation and maintenance of the PVMSP, no population in-migration would occur that would increase the local population or would require the need for new or physically altered parks and recreational facilities or staff levels within the Project's regional or local study area. Additionally, the Project would not eliminate any lands designated for recreational use. Impacts would

be less than significant during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning.

Construction of the Project would result in an average of approximately 300 daily construction workers. In the event of an on-site accident during Project construction, the Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) would provide first responder emergency medical care. The nearest RCFD fire stations are staffed full-time, 24 hours, 7 days a week, with a minimum three-person crew, including paramedics. While a high number of construction employees would be located on-site, local area emergency medical facilities are expected to adequately handle any worksite accidents requiring their attention. The available emergency medical and hospital facilities serving the Project area and local study area are expected to adequately handle the permanent addition of 12 full-time staff and the operation- and maintenance-related demands of the Project. Impacts would be less than significant during Project construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning.

Although Project construction temporarily would increase the number of people within the Palo Verde Valley, it would not substantially increase the population and would not require new or expanded library facilities within the area. During operation and maintenance, consistent with the impacts previously discussed for construction, the Project would not include a residential component that would substantially increase the population, and would not require new or expanded library facilities or personnel within the area. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.14-15 to 3.14-19).

Impact: *New Storm Water Drainage Facilities or Expansion of Existing Facilities*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, which could cause significant environmental effects.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Construction of the Project would require ground-disturbing activities, including, solar array installation, and construction of access roads. Grading could alter naturally occurring drainage patterns and result in soil erosion, sedimentation, long-term siltation, and increased stormwater runoff. Erosion and other potential alteration of the bed and bank would be avoided or minimized through implementation of protective measures (e.g., use of geomats in wetted or soft portions of the stream) as described in BMP-1 Drainage, Erosion, and Sedimentation Control Plan, and BMP-2 Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. It is not anticipated that these proposed storm water drainage facilities would result in significant adverse effects to the environment. Impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.14-20).

Impact: *Insufficient Water Supplies Available To Serve the Project from Existing Entitlements and Resources*

Threshold: *The Project would not have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The current source of water for agriculture is provided by the Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID) from its Colorado River contract. During construction, water would be used for dust suppression, concrete manufacturing, fire safety, and the implementation of BMPs and Mitigation Measures. In addition, construction of the new substations and operation and maintenance buildings would introduce a new but small area of impermeable surfaces that would potentially interfere with groundwater recharge within the groundwater basin. During operation, the Project would require a limited amount of water for washing of solar panels, fire water supply, vegetation maintenance, and supply for the operations and maintenance activities, including twice-yearly cleaning. All of this demand would be met with non-potable supplies, except for the operations and maintenance building, which would require potable water. Non-potable water for the Project would be provided from existing PVID

surface water entitlements that support the agricultural operations currently on the site.

A Water Supply Assessment conducted for the Project determined that adequate water supplies exist to serve the Project's non-potable water demand, whether the Project is served through surface diversions (as is currently done for the agricultural operations) or served through groundwater extraction, which is not anticipated. The Project's potable water supply would be provided by Riverside County Service Area #122. On October 26, 2012, Riverside County issued a Will Serve letter stating that Riverside County Service Area #122 will be able to serve the proposed Project operations and maintenance buildings with potable water to support the Project (see Appendix G).

Additionally, the current ongoing agricultural water use is significantly higher than the proposed water needs for construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning. This impact is less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.14-20 to 3.14-21).

Impact: *Insufficient Permitted Capacity to Accommodate Solid Waste Disposal Needs*

Threshold: *The Project would not be served by a landfill with insufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs and would comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The closest landfill to the Project area is the Blythe Sanitary Landfill. According to the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), the remaining capacity of the Blythe Sanitary Landfill is 4,159,388 cubic yards (cy) and is estimated to operate until year 2047 (CalRecycle, 2016a). The Project would generate solid waste during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning. It is anticipated that the 450-MW Proposed Project would generate up to approximately 25 cubic yards of solid waste per week during construction; and during operations is estimated to generate up to approximately 0.6 cubic yard of non-hazardous solid waste per week (ESA 2016). The Blythe landfill,

which is located closest to the Project area, has sufficient capacity to continue to provide solid waste disposal through 2047. Therefore, sufficient capacity is anticipated to be available for waste disposal. The Project would comply with applicable federal, State, and local regulations related to solid waste. In addition, implementation of a Waste Recycling Plan (BMP-20) would limit the amount of waste disposed of at the landfill. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3-14-21 to 3.14-22).

M. Recreation

Impact: *Substantial Physical Deterioration of Neighborhood and Regional Parks*

Threshold: *The Project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Approximately 48 acres of BLM-administered Multiple Use Class M public lands would be permanently disturbed by installation of the proposed gen-tie line. Recreationalists could compensate for the loss of Class M public lands by utilizing other desert lands in the vicinity of the Project for their recreational experiences and benefits. Although there would be potential to result in more concentrated use of those areas, leading to loss of some native vegetation, wildlife habitat fragmentation or loss, elevated soil loss, and increases in noise, this impact would be less than significant as high recreational use is not observed within the Project area. Further, during operation and maintenance, and decommissioning, if any temporary or permanent workers should move into the region from elsewhere, the existing parks and recreational facilities have adequate capacity to accommodate the associated increase in use without resulting in substantial physical deterioration. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.15-13 to 3.15-14).

N. Transportation and Traffic

Impact: *Inadequate Emergency Access or New or Altered Maintenance of Roads*

Threshold: *The Project would not result in inadequate emergency access or result in the need for new or altered maintenance of roads.*

1. Project Impact(s):

During construction and decommissioning, no road closures are anticipated and significant impacts regarding emergency access would be less than significant. During operation, areas with proposed solar panels would be fenced in, and existing dirt access roads, including portions of Megin Avenue, Rannels Boulevard, Dave Street, Keim Boulevard, 7th Avenue, and 8th Avenue. However, despite these closures, operation of the Project would not affect emergency access in the Project area with implementation of BMP-5, which would ensure that fire and emergency responders would be informed about emergency access within the solar facility site and new interior access roads. This impact would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.16-22).

Impact: *Conflict with Adopted Policies, Plans, or Programs Regarding Public Transit, Bicycle or Pedestrian Facilities*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities.*

1. Project Impact(s):

During construction and decommissioning, workers would park personal vehicles on-site, where adequate parking space would be provided. As discussed in BMP-15, parking lots would be designed and constructed with appropriate design standards. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities currently do not exist in the study area. The existing pedestrian network does not currently provide sidewalks connecting adjoining land uses along Neighbours Boulevard, Riverside Drive, and Hobson Way. Bus service is offered by the Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency (PVVTA) and Routes 3, 4, and 5 travel along Hobson Way, which passes through the study area and heads west toward Mesa Verde. During construction and decommissioning, the Project may

increase travel times. During operation, the proposed solar panels would be fenced in and portions of existing dirt access roads would be closed. Access along Buck Boulevard would remain open and accessible, and impacts would be less than significant (DEIR pp. 3.16-22 to 3.16-23).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors that the following environmental impacts identified in the EIR are potentially significant but can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. The potentially significant impacts and the Mitigation Measures that would reduce them to a less-than-significant level are set out in the EIR and are summarized as follows:

A. **Agriculture and Forestry Resources**

Impact: *Convert Farmland to Non-Agricultural Use*

Threshold: *The Project would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would be located on 322 acres of Important Farmland (148 acres of Prime Farmland, 85 acres of Unique Farmland, and 89 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance). The gen-tie line would traverse 28 acres of Prime Farmland. The Project would result in the direct utilization of existing farmland, within the solar facility boundary and gen-tie corridor, for non-agricultural uses for 30 years in the unincorporated area of Riverside County. During the operation and maintenance phase of the Project, the solar facility site and gen-tie corridor would continue to be utilized as a non-agricultural use, which would result in a significant impact to Important Farmland

The Project's operating life, with appropriate maintenance, repair, and component replacement, is expected to be 30 years; however, the Applicant is seeking CUPs limited to a 30-year term. At the end of the 30-year operational period of the proposed Project, the Project components may be decommissioned and deconstructed. Following removal of all above-ground Project components the property would be

available for conversion back to agricultural use after Project decommissioning. Alternatively, if the utility buyer is available for extension or another energy buyer emerges, the Project could continue to operate, and the operational impacts described in this EIR would continue indefinitely (DEIR pp. 3.2-16 to 3.2-17).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measure (AG-1) outlined below would reduce the Project's significant impact to Important Farmland to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level (DEIR pp. 3.2-21).

Mitigation Measure AG-1 states:

Prior to issuance of a grading permit, the Applicant shall provide written evidence of completion of at least one of the following measures to mitigate the impact to agricultural resources caused by conversion of land subject to the grading permit to non-agricultural uses. Important farmlands include Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmlands as shown on maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency that is in effect as of the date of approval of the Project.

1. Acquire and record agricultural conservation easement(s) meeting the following criteria:

    a. Two acres placed under conservation easement for each net acre of Important Farmland converted to non-agricultural uses during the life of the Project. A plot plan shall be submitted substantiating the net

acreage calculation, which shall be consistent with the definition of "Net Acreage" in County Policy B-29.[1]

b. Land subject to the conservation easement shall be located in Riverside County and must be of the same or higher State of California Department of Conservation farmland classification (Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance) as the land that has been converted to non-agricultural uses.

c. The conservation easement must be held by a third party having the capacity to hold such an easement and in an easement form acceptable to Riverside County.

d. The Applicant must provide to the easement holder an endowment sufficient to generate funds for ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the easement.

2. Purchase of credits from an established agricultural land mitigation bank in an amount sufficient to achieve a level of protection at least equivalent to Section 1 of Mitigation Measure AG-1 above;

3. Contribution of agricultural land or equivalent funding to an organization that provides for the preservation of farmland in California in an amount sufficient to achieve a level of protection at least equivalent to Section 1 of Mitigation Measure AG-1 above; or

4. Participation in any agricultural land mitigation program adopted by Riverside County that provides equal or more effective mitigation than the measures listed above.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to issuance of a grading permit

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

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1 The County of Riverside's Board of Supervisor's Policy B-29 defines "Net Acreage" as all areas involved in the production of power including, but not limited to, the power block, solar collection equipment, areas contiguous to solar collection equipment, transformers, transmission lines and/or piping, transmission facilities (on and off-site), service roads regardless of surface type – including service roads between panels or collectors, structures, and fencing surrounding all such areas. Net acreage shall not include off-site access roads or areas specifically set aside either as environmentally sensitive or designated as open space, and shall not include the fencing of such set aside areas.

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's significant impact to Important Farmland by requiring the Applicant to provide written evidence of farmland compensation for the conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses.

B. Biological Resources

Impact: *Impacts to Special-Status Species*

Threshold: *The Project would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Potential temporary, indirect impacts to special-status plant species could arise from unmitigated runoff and sedimentation, erosion, fugitive dust, and unauthorized access outside of the disturbance area by construction workers. Runoff, sedimentation, and erosion can adversely impact plant populations by damaging individuals or by altering site conditions sufficiently to favor other species (native and non-natives) that would competitively displace the special-status species. Construction-generated fugitive dust can adversely affect plants by reducing the rates of metabolic processes, such as photosynthesis and respiration, and may affect their nutritional qualities for wildlife. Impacts to special-status plant species before implementation of Mitigation Measures would be significant. Construction of the Project would result in the permanent loss of potential desert tortoise habitat, Mojave fringe-toed lizards, Western Burrowing Owls, raptor species, American badger, desert kit fox, nesting migratory birds, and impacts would be potentially significant. The Project site may be recolonized by special-status species such as protected nesting birds during operation, which would require the implementation of protection measures during decommissioning. If special-status species have recolonized the Project site during decommissioning there would be a potential for significant impacts to these species during decommissioning (DEIR pp. 3.4-35 to 3.4-46).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures outlined below would reduce the Project's impacts to special-status plant species to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-8 and BIO-10 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level (DEIR pp. 3.4-57 to 3.4- 65).

Mitigation Measure BIO-1 states:

The Lead Biologist shall monitor the work area bi-weekly during ground disturbing construction activities. The Lead Biologist shall conduct monitoring for any area subject to disturbance from construction activities that may impact biological resources. The Lead Biologist's duties include minimizing impacts to special-status species, native vegetation, wildlife habitat, and unique resources. Where appropriate, the inspector will flag the boundaries of biologically sensitive areas and monitor any construction activities in these areas to ensure that ground disturbance activities and impacts occur within designated limits. The Lead Biologist will also be responsible for ensuring the BMPs shall be employed to prevent loss of habitat caused by Project-related impacts (e.g., grading or clearing for new roads) within the gen-tie line corridor. The resume of the proposed Lead Biologist will be provided to the County (as appropriate) for concurrence prior to onset of ground-disturbing activities. The Lead Biologist will have demonstrated expertise with the biological resources within the Project area.

Timing/Implementation: Implemented during construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-2 states:

Pre-construction surveys shall be conducted for State and federally listed Threatened and Endangered, Proposed, Petitioned, and Candidate plants in a 250-foot radius around all areas subject to ground-disturbing activity including, but not limited to, tower pad preparation and construction areas, solar facilities, pulling and tensioning sites, assembly yards, and areas subject to grading for new access roads. The surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate blooming period(s) by an authorized plant ecologist/biologist according to protocols established by the USFWS, CDFW, BLM, and California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Measures shall be taken to avoid and minimize impacts to special-status plant species that are found to be present during the pre-construction surveys. This includes avoiding unnecessary or unauthorized trespass by workers and equipment, staging and storage of equipment and materials, refueling activities, and littering or dumping debris in areas known to contain special-status plant species that are not within the designated construction footprint.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-3 states:

In areas identified as suitable habitat during the 2011 and 2012 surveys, biological monitors shall conduct pre-construction surveys for American badger no more than 30 days prior to initiation of construction activities. Surveys shall also consider the potential presence of dens within 100 feet of the Project boundary (including utility corridors and access roads) and shall be performed for each phase of construction. If dens are detected each den shall then be further classified as inactive, potentially active, or definitely active. Inactive dens that would be directly impacted by construction activities shall be excavated by hand and backfilled to prevent reuse by badgers. Potential dens that would be directly impacted by construction activities shall be monitored by the Biological Monitor for three consecutive nights using a tracking medium such as diatomaceous medium or fire clay and/or infrared camera

stations at the entrance. If no tracks are observed in the tracking medium or no photos of the target species are captured after three nights, the den shall be excavated and backfilled by hand. If tracks are observed, the badger dens shall be fitted with the one-way trap doors to encourage badgers to move off-site. After 48 hours post-installation, the den shall be excavated and collapsed, following the same protocol as with western burrowing owl burrows. These dens shall be collapsed prior to construction of the desert tortoise fence, to allow badgers the opportunity to move off-site without impediment. If an active natal den is detected on the site, the CDFW shall be contacted within 24 hours. The course of action would depend on the age of the pups, location of the den site, status of the perimeter site fence, and the pending construction activities proposed near the den. A 500-foot no disturbance buffer shall be maintained around all active dens. Alternatively, a designated biologist authorized by CDFW, shall trap and remove badgers from occupied dens and move them off-site into appropriate habitat.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to the initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-4 states:

In areas identified as suitable habitat during the 2011 and 2012 surveys, biological monitors shall conduct pre-construction surveys for kit fox no more than 30 days prior to initiation of construction activities. Surveys shall also consider the potential presence of dens within 100 feet of the Project boundary (including utility corridors and access roads) and shall be performed for each phase of construction. The methodologies for pre-construction kit fox surveys shall be included in the BRMIMP, as prescribed by Mitigation Measure BIO-10. If dens are detected each den shall then be further classified as inactive, potentially active, or definitely active. Inactive dens that would be directly impacted by construction activities shall be excavated by hand and backfilled to prevent reuse by kit fox. Potential dens that would be directly impacted by construction activities shall be monitored by the

Biological Monitor for three consecutive nights using a tracking medium such as diatomaceous medium or fire clay and/or infrared camera stations at the entrance. If no tracks are observed in the tracking medium or no photos of the target species are captured after three nights, the den shall be excavated and backfilled by hand. If tracks are observed, the kit fox dens shall be fitted with the one-way trap doors to encourage kit fox to move off-site. After 48 hours post-installation, the den shall be excavated and collapsed, following the same protocol as with inactive western burrowing owl burrows. These dens shall be collapsed prior to construction of the desert tortoise fence, to allow kit fox the opportunity to move off-site without impediment. If an active natal den is detected on the site, the CDFW shall be contacted within 24 hours. The course of action would depend on the age of the pups, location of the den site, status of the perimeter site fence, and the pending construction activities proposed near the den. A 500-foot no disturbance buffer shall be maintained around all active dens until CDFW provides direction on how to proceed. Habitat-based mitigation or other appropriate mitigation as discussed previously for desert tortoise and western burrowing owl shall provide mitigation for impacts to non-listed special-status species that inhabit overlapping suitable habitat. The following measures are required to reduce the likelihood of distemper transmission:

- No pets shall be allowed on the site prior to or during construction.
- Any kit fox hazing activities that include the use of animal repellents such as coyote urine must be cleared through the CDFW prior to use.
- Any documented kit fox mortality shall be reported to the CDFW within 24 hours of identification. If a dead kit fox is observed, it shall be retained and protected from scavengers until the CDFW determines if the collection of necropsy samples is justified (FEIR pp. 3-3).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-5 states:

Desert Tortoise Protection

(1) Qualified Biologist: In the following measures, a "qualified biologist" is defined as a person with appropriate education, training, and experience to conduct tortoise surveys, monitor project activities, provide worker education programs, and supervise or perform other implementing actions. The person must demonstrate an acceptable knowledge of tortoise biology, desert tortoise impact minimization techniques, habitat requirements, sign identification techniques, and survey procedures. Evidence of such knowledge may include work as a compliance monitor on a project in desert tortoise habitat, work on desert tortoise trend plot or transect surveys, conducting surveys for desert tortoise, or other research or field work on desert tortoise. Attendance at a training course endorsed by the agencies (e.g., Desert Tortoise Council tortoise training workshop) is a supporting qualification. All qualified biologists must be approved by the USFWS, CDFW, and the Riverside Environmental Programs Department (EPD) prior to starting any work on site. The names and qualifications of proposed qualified biologists shall be provided to USFWS, CDFW, and EPD for approval at least 30 days prior to the biologists implementing desert tortoise protection measures described herein.

A qualified biologist will be on-site during all construction. The qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction clearance survey of the Project area, watch for tortoises wandering into the construction areas, check under vehicles, and examine excavations and other potential pitfalls for entrapped animals. The qualified biologist will be responsible for overseeing compliance with desert tortoise protective measures and for coordination with the Field Contact Representative (FCR) (described below). The qualified biologist shall have the authority to halt all Project activities that are

in violation of these measures or that may result in the "take" of a tortoise. The qualified biologist shall have a copy of the conservation measures prescribed by USFWS for the gen-tie line through the section 7 consultation process. The qualified biologist is not authorized to handle or relocate desert tortoises as part of this Project without proper authorization from USFWS and CDFW.

(2) Pre-Construction Clearance Survey: The qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction clearance survey of the Project area. Transects for clearance surveys will be spaced 15 feet apart. Clearance will be considered complete after two successive surveys have been conducted without finding any desert tortoises. Clearance surveys must be conducted during the active season for desert tortoises (April through May or September through October). The qualified biologist is not authorized to handle or relocate desert tortoises as part of this Project without proper authorization from USFWS and CDFW. If a tortoise or tortoise burrow is located during clearance surveys, the USFWS and CDFW will be contacted for direction on how to proceed.

(3) Field Contact Representative: The Project Applicant will designate a FCR who will be responsible for overseeing compliance with desert tortoise protective measures and for coordination with the USFWS and CDFW. The FCR will have the authority to halt all Project activities that are not in compliance with the conservation measures prescribed by USFWS for the gen-tie line through the Section 7 consultation process. The FCR will have a copy of these conservation measures when work is being conducted on the site. The FCR may be an agent for the company, the site manager, any other Project employee, a biological monitor, or other contracted biologist. Neither the FCR nor any other project proponent may bar or limit any communications between any Natural Resource Agency or The County of Riverside Environmental Programs Division and any project biologist,

biological monitor or contracted biologist. Any incident occurring during the Project activities that is considered by the qualified biologist to be in non-compliance with these measures will be documented immediately by the qualified biologist. The FCR will ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken. Corrective actions will be documented by the qualified biologist. The following incidents will require immediate cessation of the Project activities causing the incident: (1) location of a desert tortoise within the exclusion fencing; (2) imminent threat of injury or death to a desert tortoise; (3) unauthorized handling of a desert tortoise, regardless of intent; (4) operation of construction equipment or vehicles outside a project area cleared of desert tortoise, except on designated roads; and (5) conducting any construction activity without a biological monitor where one is required.

(4) Worker Training: Prior to the onset of construction activities, a desert tortoise education program will be presented by the FCR or qualified biologist to all personnel who will be present on work areas within the Project area. Following the onset of construction, any new employee will be required to formally complete the tortoise education program prior to working on-site. At a minimum, the tortoise education program will cover the following topics:

- A detailed description of the desert tortoise, including color photographs;
- The distribution and general behavior of the desert tortoise;
- Sensitivity of the species to human activities;
- The protection the desert tortoise receives under the Act, including prohibitions and penalties incurred for violation of the Act;
- The protective measures being implemented to conserve the desert tortoise during construction activities; and

- Procedures and a point of contact if a desert tortoise is observed on-site.

(5) Site Fencing: Desert tortoise exclusion fencing will be installed around the Project area, and will remain in place for the life of the Project. The fence will adhere to USFWS design guidelines, available at: http://www.fws.gov/venturaispecies _information/protocols guidelines/docs/dtlDT_ Exclusion-Fence_2005.pdf. The qualified biologist will conduct a clearance survey before the tortoise fence is enclosed to ensure no tortoises are on the Project area. If a tortoise is found, all construction activity will halt and the USFWS and CDFW contacted for direction on how to proceed. Once installed, exclusion fencing will be inspected at least monthly and following all rain events, and corrective action taken if needed to maintain the integrity of the tortoise barrier. Fencing around the Project area will include a desert tortoise exclusion gate. This gate will remain closed at all times, except when vehicles are entering or leaving the Project area. If it is deemed necessary to leave the gate open for extended periods of time (e.g., during high traffic periods), the gate may be left open as long as a qualified biologist is present to monitor for tortoise activity in the vicinity. Sites with potential hazards to desert tortoise (e.g., auger holes, steep-sided depressions) that are outside of the desert tortoise exclusion fencing will be fenced by installing exclusionary fencing, or not left unfilled overnight.

(6) Refuse Disposal: All trash and food items shall be promptly contained within closed, raven-proof containers. These will be regularly removed from the Project area to reduce the attractiveness of the area to common ravens and other desert predators. The FCR will be responsible for ensuring that trash is removed regularly from the site such that containers do not overflow, and that the trash containers are kept securely closed when not in use.

(7) Tortoises under vehicles: The underneath of vehicles parked outside of desert tortoise exclusion fencing will be inspected immediately prior to the vehicle being moved. If a tortoise is found beneath a vehicle, the vehicle will not be moved until the desert tortoise leaves of its own accord.

(8) Tortoise Observations: No handling of desert tortoise or burrow excavation is allowed as part of the proposed action, unless authorized by USFWS and CDFW. If a tortoise is observed on or near the road accessing the Project area, vehicular traffic will stop and the tortoise will be allowed to move off the road on its own. If a tortoise is observed outside of exclusion fencing, construction will stop and the tortoise shall be allowed to move out of the area on its own. If a tortoise or tortoise burrow is observed within the exclusion fencing, all construction will stop, and the USFWS and CDFW contacted for direction on how to proceed.

The following activities are not authorized and will require immediate cessation of the construction activities causing the incident: (1) location of a desert tortoise within the exclusion fencing; (2) imminent threat of injury or death to a desert tortoise; (3) unauthorized handling of a desert tortoise, regardless of intent; (4) operation of construction equipment or vehicles outside a project area cleared of desert tortoise, except on designated roads; and (5) conducting any construction activity without a biological monitor where one is required.

(9) Dead or Injured Specimens: Upon locating a dead or injured tortoise, the Applicant or agent is to immediately notify the Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office by telephone within 3 days of the finding. Written notification must be made within five days of the finding, both to the appropriate USFWS field office and to the USFWS Division of Law Enforcement. The information provided must include the date and time of the finding or incident

(if known), location of the carcass or injured animal, a photograph, cause of death, if known, and other pertinent information (FEIR pp. 3-3 to 3-6).

Timing/Implementation: Implemented during construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-6 states:

Burrowing Owl Protection: A Draft Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (Plan) has been developed to describe monitoring, reporting, and management of the burrowing owl during the construction, O&M, and decommissioning of the proposed Project, as required by CDFW and County of Riverside. It has been prepared following the 2012 CDFW Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFW, 2012), and describes a multi-tiered approach to prevent or reduce impacts during construction and operation of the Project. Below is a general summary of the Plan requirements:

- Pre-construction surveys will be conducted throughout the Project area and laydown areas for burrowing owls, possible burrows, and sign of owls (e.g., pellets, feathers, white wash) no less than 14 days prior to site grading;
- Time lapses between project phases/activities could trigger the need for subsequent take avoidance surveys, as stated in Appendix D of the CDFW 2012 survey guidelines. The approved Biologist will determine when subsequent surveys are needed;
- Should any of the pre-construction surveys yield positive results for the presence of burrowing owl or active burrows within the Project area, the approved Biologist will coordinate with the Construction Contractor to implement avoidance and set-back distances. Disturbance of owls or occupied burrows during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31) will not be permitted and, to minimize disturbance, use of down-hole cameras to inspect burrows will be used only after one way doors and visual monitoring have taken place;

- If suitable burrows are observed and documented during the pre-construction surveys within the Project footprint and determined to be inactive, these burrows will be excavated and filled in under the supervision of the approved Biologist(s) prior to clearing and grading;
- To compensate for impacts to burrowing owls in activity areas on the northern part of the Project, 146 acres of habitat have been identified adjacent to the Project area. A letter agreeing to dedicate the existing compensation lands must be approved by CDFW and the County prior to ground disturbance. Land used for compensation must be of equal value or better than the land impacted. Ownership of compensation lands will be transferred prior to any surface disturbance to one of the following: the County, or an entity acceptable to the County or CDFW that can effectively manage listed species and their habitats.
- The Plan provides detailed methods and guidance for passive relocation of burrowing owls occurring within the Project disturbance area; and

The Plan describes monitoring and management of the passive relocation, including a 3-year monitoring program (FEIR pp. 3-6 to 3-7).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-7 states:

If Project construction activities cannot occur completely outside the bird breeding season, then pre-construction surveys for active nests shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within 1,200 feet of the construction zone no more than 7 days before the initiation of construction that would occur between January 1 and September 30. The qualified biologist will hold a current Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Riverside to conduct nesting bird surveys. If breeding birds with active nests are found, a biological monitor shall establish a species-specific buffer around the nests for construction activities, 250 feet or 1,200

feet for raptor nests. Extent of protection will be based on proposed management activities, human activities existing at the onset of nesting initiation, species, topography, vegetative cover, and other factors. When appropriate, a no-disturbance buffer around active nest sites will be required from nest-site selection to fledging. If for any reason a bird nest must be removed during the nesting season, written documentation providing concurrence from the USFWS and CDFW authorizing the nest relocation shall be obtained. All nest removals shall occur after the nest is demonstrated to be inactive by a qualified biologist and have been shown to not result in take as defined by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). A Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy (BBCS) will be developed for this Project and include additional protections for avian species. The BBCS would be based on specific recommendations from the USFWS and CDFW, and would provide:

- A statement of the Applicant's understanding of the importance of bird and bat safety and management's commitment to remain in compliance with relevant laws
- Documentation of conservation measures PVMSP would implement through design and operations to avoid and reduce bird and bat fatalities at both solar generation facilities as well as the associated gen-tie line, including consideration of bird height and wingspan requirements and use of flight diverters, perch and nest discouraging material, etc.
- Consistent, practical and up-to-date direction to PVMSP staff on how to avoid, reduce, and monitor bird and bat fatalities
- Establishment of accepted processes to monitor and mitigate bird and bat fatalities; establishment of accepted fatality thresholds that, if surpassed, would trigger adaptive changes to management and mitigation management
- An adaptive management framework to be applied, if thresholds are surpassed
- A 3-year post-construction monitoring study

The BBCS will be submitted to USFWS and CDFW for review at least 60 days prior to construction. The BBCS would be considered a "living document" that articulates the Applicant's commitment to develop and implement a program to increase avian and bat safety and reduce risk. As progress is made through the program or challenges are encountered, the BBCS may be reviewed, modified, and updated. The initial goals of this BBCS are to:

- Provide a framework to facilitate compliance with federal law protecting avian species and a means to document compliance for regulators and the interested public;
- Allow the Agent to manage risk to protected bird and bat species in an organized and cost-effective manner;
- Establish a mechanism for communication between PVMSP managers and natural resource regulators (primarily USFWS and CDFW);
- Foster a sense of stewardship with PVMSP owners, managers, and field engineers;
- Articulate and cultivate a culture of wildlife awareness (specifically birds and bats) and the importance of their protection (FEIR pp. 3-7 to 3-9).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-8 states:

To mitigate for permanent habitat loss and direct impacts to Mojave fringe-toed lizards the Applicant shall provide compensatory mitigation at a 3:1 ratio, which may include compensation lands purchased in fee or in easement in whole or in part, for impacts to stabilized or partially stabilized desert dune habitat (i.e., dune, sand ramp, or fine-sandy wash habitat). Suitable Mojave fringe-toed lizard habitat is located throughout the gen-tie line corridor and potential habitat was detected on approximately 3 percent of the Project area (creosote bush scrub habitat). If compensation lands are acquired, the Applicant shall provide funding for the

acquisition in fee title or in easement, initial habitat improvements and long-term maintenance and management of the compensation lands. A letter agreeing to dedicate the existing compensation lands must be approved by BLM, USFWS, CDFW, and the County prior to ground disturbance. Lands used for compensation must be of equal value or better than the land impacted. Ownership of compensation lands will be transferred prior to any surface disturbance to one of the following: the County or an entity acceptable to the agencies that can effectively manage listed species and their habitats (FEIR pp. 3-9).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to the initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure BIO-10 states:

A Biological Resources Mitigation Implementation and Monitoring Plan (BRMIMP) will be developed to summarize all of the various biological mitigation, monitoring, and compliance measures and include measures from the various biological plans and permits developed for PVMSP. The BRMIMP shall include the following:

1. All biological resources mitigation, monitoring, and compliance measures outlined in this EIR;
2. All biological resource mitigation, monitoring and compliance measures required in federal agency terms and conditions, such as conservation measures prescribed by USFWS for the gen-tie line through the section 7 consultation process;
3. All biological resource mitigation, monitoring and compliance measures outlined in the Burrowing Owl Mitigation and Monitoring Plan and the Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy (the full biological plans will be included in the attachments to the BRMIMP);
4. All locations on a map, at an approved scale, of sensitive biological resource areas subject to disturbance and areas requiring temporary protection and avoidance during construction and operation;

5. Duration for each type of monitoring and a description of monitoring methodologies and frequency;

6. Performance standards to be used to help decide if/when proposed mitigation is or is not successful; and

7. A process for proposing plan modifications to appropriate agencies for review and approval. The BRMIMP document shall be provided at least 90 days prior to start of any Project-related ground disturbing activities to the USFWS, CDFW, and County for review and approval. Implementation of BRMIMP measures will be reported in the monthly compliance reports by the Lead Biologist (i.e., survey results, construction activities that were monitored, species observed) (FEIR pp. 3- to 3-10).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's impact to special-status plant and wildlife species to a less than significant level by requiring the identification of a Designated Biologist that would be dedicated to biological monitoring during construction, preconstruction surveys for special status wildlife species, avoidance and minimization of special status wildlife species impacts, avoidance and minimization of rare plant impacts, off-site compensatory mitigation, and a worker training program.

Impact: *Impacts to Federal Protected Wetlands*

Threshold: *The Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on federal protected wetlands, as defined by Section 404 of the CWA, or State-protected jurisdictional areas not subject to regulation under Section 404 of the CWA through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would impact one drainage that qualifies as a jurisdictional water of the United States within the gen-tie corridor. While potential construction- and

operation-related impacts from the Project would be minimized through implementation of BMPs, impacts before implementation of Mitigation Measures would be potentially significant (DEIR pp. 3.4-47 to 3.4-48).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures outlined below would reduce the Project's potential impact to federal protected wetlands to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-9 and HYD-1 through HYD-4 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure BIO-9 states:

1. Impacts to areas under jurisdiction of the USACE, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and CDFW shall be avoided as necessary to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels. A formal jurisdictional delineation of regulated waters and wetlands shall be conducted on the Project site prior to construction to verify avoidance of such resources. Where avoidance of jurisdictional areas is not necessary to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels, including emergency repairs, and access/spur roads within the ephemeral channel, the Applicant shall provide the necessary mitigation required as part of wetland permitting. This will include creation, restoration, and/or preservation of suitable jurisdictional habitat along with adequate buffers to protect the function and values of jurisdictional area mitigation. The location(s) of the mitigation will be determined in consultation with the Applicant and the responsible agency(s) as part of the permitting process (FEIR pp. 3-10).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to initiation of construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure HYD-1 states:

Existing drainage crossings shall be utilized at streams, washes, and irrigation channels to the full extent necessary to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels. New access roads not required for ongoing operation and maintenance shall be permanently closed after construction using the most effective and least environmentally damaging methods appropriate to that specific area, with concurrence of the land manager (e.g., stockpiling and replacing topsoil, rock replacement) in a manner that most closely matches undisturbed or pre-developed conditions of the area to emulate natural drainage patterns.

Timing/Implementation: Implemented during Project Construction, Operations, and Maintenance

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure HYD-2 states:

Roads would be built as near as possible to right angles to streams and washes. Culverts would be installed where necessary and sized in accordance with local county regulations. All construction and maintenance activities shall be conducted in a manner that would minimize disturbance to vegetation and drainage channels, including ephemeral stream banks. Culverts shall also be designed with minimum impacts to floodplains. Any encroachment into or modification of the floodplain shall only be permitted in accordance with the District's approval based on demonstrative evidence that no adverse effects would occur upstream or downstream of the site. In addition, road construction would include dust-control measures during construction especially in sensitive areas. All existing roads would be left in a condition equal to or better than their condition prior to the construction of the gen-tie line and other Project components.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to Construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure HYD-3 states:

Stormwater drainage inside substations would be designed to minimize erosion and increase sediment control. Internal runoff would be released from the switching station by means of surface drainage structures designed to filter contaminants from water flow. Drainage from the property would be collected and controlled by surface improvements, as detailed in the Drainage, Erosion, and Sedimentation Control Plan (BMP-1).

Timing/Implementation: Prior to Construction

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure HYD-4 states:

New pervious areas associated with temporary construction would be restored to existing conditions, including but not limited to revegetation, to the extent possible after completion of Project construction.

Timing/Implementation: Implemented during Project Operation

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce potential significant impacts to a less-than-significant level through implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-9 and Hydrology and Water Quality Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4. Mitigation Measure BIO-9 requires avoidance of jurisdictional areas and mitigation in accordance with requisite permitting for unavoidable impacts. HYD-1 through HYD-3 requires design standards to minimize impacts to hydrologic functions, such as utilizing existing drainage crossings, constructing new roads at right angles to streams and washes, and minimizing and controlling stormwater runoff. HYD-4 requires restoration of temporary work areas after the completion of Project construction. The same BMPs and Mitigation Measures would be applied to decommissioning activities.

Impact: *Conflicts with Local Policies or Ordinances*

Threshold: *The Project would not conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would impact resources protected by General Plan provisions and the NECO Plan. Wildlife species may experience a temporary impact during the construction and decommissioning phases and increased human use; however, species that may potentially move through the site are acclimated to the existing human use in the Project area. The Project would result in impacts to biological resources that, unless mitigated, would be significant (DEIR pp. 3.4-49).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures identified below would reduce the Project's potential impacts with regard to local policies and ordinances to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-10 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (also listed above) would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-10 would reduce this impact to less-than-significant levels by requiring the identification of a Designated Biologist that would be dedicated to biological monitoring during construction,, preconstruction surveys for special status wildlife species, avoidance and minimization of special status wildlife species impacts, avoidance and minimization of rare plant impacts, off-site compensatory mitigation, and a worker training program.

Impact: *Fish or Wildlife Species of Plant or Animal Communities*

Threshold: *The Project would not substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare, or threatened species.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would result in a potentially significant impact due to permanent disturbance to Desert Riparian Woodland Wash community associated with Pole 43. Further, in natural areas such as the creosote bush scrub communities (approximately 397 acres), access to the construction sites or installation of the solar facility and gen-tie towers may result in mortality primarily to burrow-dwelling animals, eggs and nestlings of bird species with small, well-hidden nests, and species with slower or constrained mobility (e.g., snakes, lizards, and amphibians). Approximately 310 acres of creosote bush scrub communities were identified on the proposed gen-tie corridor; however, only a small portion of this area would be affected by the facility footprint. More mobile species, like birds and larger mammals, are likely to relocate and utilize an adjacent habitat area if they are present during the solar facility installation and the clearing and grading phase associated with tower construction. The less mobile and smaller wildlife species could be potentially impacted by construction equipment, whereas other wildlife, such as birds and large mammals like the American badger, may be temporarily displaced from the immediate construction areas.

The implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce impacts from decommissioning to less-than-significant levels and inform the need to implement other measures identified in this EIR. These measures would identify potential biological constraints and provide measures designed to reduce wildlife mortality, ensure long-term project site suitability, and educate on-site personnel. Additionally, Mitigation Measures BIO-2 through

BIO-8 and BIO-10 would be applied if needed, to mitigate potentially significant impacts to BUOW, Swainson's hawk and other raptors, desert tortoise, American badger, desert kit fox, and other wildlife and plant species that may be encountered during the decommissioning period, to less-than-significant levels (DEIR pp. 3.4-49 to 3.4-50).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures identified below would reduce the Project's potential impact to desert riparian woodland wash and creosote bush scrub communities located on the Project site to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-10 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (also identified above) would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-10 would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level by requiring the identification of a Designated Biologist that would be dedicated to biological monitoring during construction, preconstruction surveys for special status wildlife species, avoidance and minimization of special status wildlife species impacts, avoidance and minimization of rare plant impacts, off-site compensatory mitigation, and a worker training program.

C. Cultural and Paleontological Resources

Impact: *Historic and Archaeological Resources*

Threshold: *The Project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical or archaeological resource, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project site is located in an area containing existing historic and archaeological resources, and cultural resources surveys result in the identification of one archaeological site determined to be California Register of Historic Places (CRHR)- and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible, and considered a historical resource under CEQA. Ten other cultural resources have not been evaluated for CRHR, and, therefore, could qualify as a historical resources and/or unique archaeological resource under CEQA. Project design would avoid ground-disturbing activities at or within 100 feet of all 11 of the cultural resources in the Project area that have either been previously determined CRHR-eligible (i.e., qualify as a historical resource under CEQA) or remain unevaluated for CRHR-eligibility (i.e., may qualify as a historical resource under CEQA). The Project area is considered moderately sensitive for the subsurface presence of historic-period archaeological resources associated with homesteading including stone or concrete footings and walls, filled wells or privies, and deposits of metal, glass, and/or ceramic refuse. Project ground-disturbing activities have the potential to impact previously unidentified buried historic-period and prehistoric archaeological resources. If any such resources are present in the Project area and qualify as historical resources or unique archaeological resources, any impacts to the resources resulting from the Project could be significant (DEIR pp. 3.5-29 to 3.5-31).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measure outlined below would reduce the Project's impact to historic and archaeological resources to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency (i.e., the County of Riverside), have been adopted by the County, and avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(2)).

Mitigation Measures: Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4 and HYD-1 through HYD-4 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4 are stated under the discussion for B. Biological Resources above (DEIR pp. 3.5-34 to 3.5-36).

Mitigation Measure CUL-1 states:

Prior to any ground disturbances within the Project area, the Applicant shall, for a period of at least 60 days, make a good faith effort to enter into a contract with and retain monitors designated by Tribal representatives. These monitors shall be known as the Tribal Participants for this Project. The developer shall notify the appropriate Tribe of all new phases of development. The Tribal Participants shall be required on-site during all construction-related ground disturbing activities. The developer shall submit the signed contract between the appropriate Tribe and the developer. The Project Archaeologist shall include in the report any concerns or comments the Tribal Participant has regarding the Project and shall include as an appendix any written correspondence or reports prepared by the Tribal Participant.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to any ground disturbance

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure CUL-2 states:

The County advocates avoidance as the preferred choice, and development of a discovery plan (see CUL-3) shall occur prior to Project construction. If, during ground disturbance activities associated with construction, operation and maintenance, or decommissioning, potentially significant archaeological sites are discovered that were not identified and evaluated in the archaeological survey reports or EIR conducted prior to Project approval, the following procedures shall be followed.

1. All ground disturbance activities within 100 feet of the discovered archaeological resource shall be halted until a meeting is convened between

the developer, the Project Archaeologist, the Tribal Participants, and the County to discuss the significance of the find.

2. At the meeting, the significance of the discoveries shall be discussed in consultation with the Tribal Participants and the Project Archaeologist. The County shall determine the appropriate mitigation (documentation, evaluation, recovery, avoidance, etc.) by implementing CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b) regarding mitigation related to impacts on historical resources and CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(c) and 21083.2(g) regarding archaeological resources. Mitigation shall comply with Mitigation Measure CUL-3.

3. Further ground disturbance shall not resume within the area of the discovery until a meeting is convened with the aforementioned parties and a decision is made with the concurrence of the County as to the appropriate preservation or Mitigation Measures. The Applicant shall comply with the determinations of the County.

Timing/Implementation: During construction, operation and maintenance

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure CUL-3 states:

Prior to obtaining the Project-related grading permit from the County, the Applicant shall have the Project Archaeologist prepare and submit for approval a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP). The CRMP shall be submitted to the County for approval. The CRMP shall map all known significant or unevaluated cultural resources within the Project area, as described in this EIR. The CRMP shall detail how the one CRHR-eligible resource in the Project area (P-33-002846) and ten cultural resources (P-33-020942, P-33-020943, P-33-020944, P-33-020945, P-33-020946, P-33-020947, P-33-020948, P-33-020949, P-33-020950, P-33-020951) in the Project area that have not been evaluated for CRHR-eligibility are avoided by Project design, and how these 11 resources would be marked and protected as

Environmentally Sensitive Areas during construction. The CRMP shall also map additional areas that are considered to be of high sensitivity for discovery of buried significant cultural resources, including burials, cremations, or sacred features. The CRMMP shall include protocol for collection and disposition of recorded archaeological isolates prior to Project construction, through coordination between the Applicant, County, and Tribal Participants. The CRMP shall detail provisions for monitoring construction in these high-sensitivity areas. For all post-review discoveries, the CRMP shall detail the methods, consultation procedures, and timelines for implementing Mitigation Measures CUL-2 and CUL-5, including procedures for halting construction, making appropriate notifications to agencies, officials, and Native American tribes, and assessing CRHR-eligibility. The CRMP shall specify what actions shall be undertaken if, as a result of the process required by the CRMP, it is determined that the Project would significantly impact previously unknown cultural resources. The actions to be taken shall comply with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(b).

The CRMP shall be presented to all construction personnel, with Tribal Participants in attendance, in the form of a worker education program by the Project Archaeologist prior to commencement of groundbreaking. During subsequent safety meetings on the job site, the Project Archaeologist and/or their qualified representative shall inform all new construction personnel of the cultural resources issues associated with the Project.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to issuance of a grading permit

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure CUL-4 states:

Prior to the final inspection of the first building permit, the Applicant shall prompt the Project Archaeologist to submit one wet-signed hard copy and one CD of a Cultural Resources Monitoring Report (CRMR) that complies with the current County Planning Department's requirements for Phase IV Cultural Resource

Monitoring Reports. The report shall include documentation of the required cultural/historical sensitivity training for the construction staff held during the pre-grade meeting, which shall include the County's attendance. The County shall review the report to determine adequate mitigation compliance. The accepted report shall be submitted to the County, California Historical Resources Information System Eastern Information Center, the Patton Memorial Museum, and Tribal Participants.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to final inspection of the first building permit

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's impact to historic and archaeological resources to a less-than-significant level through the use of environmental monitoring during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning, and through the preparation of a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP) for any cultural resources that can be avoided during construction. The CRMP shall map all known significant cultural resources or cultural resources that have not been evaluated for CRHR-eligibility within the Project area, and these areas would be marked and protected as Environmentally Sensitive areas during construction. Project design would avoid ground-disturbing activities at or within 100 feet of all 11 of the cultural resources in the Project area that have either been previously determined CRHR-eligible (i.e., qualify as a historical resource under CEQA) or remain unevaluated for CRHR-eligibility (i.e., may qualify as a historical resource under CEQA). Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4, in conjunction with BMP-14, which restricts vehicle traffic to designated roadways, would reduce direct impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources to less than significant. Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, which require tribal involvement and tribal monitoring of ground-disturbing construction activity, were developed in part as an outcome of Native American consultation efforts, where several tribes stressed the sensitivity of the area, and at least one tribe, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians,

recommended tribal monitoring during construction. Project grading could temporarily alter naturally occurring drainage patterns and result in soil erosion, sedimentation, long-term siltation, and increased stormwater runoff, which could result in indirect impacts to historical resources and/or unique archaeological resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4, in conjunction with BMP-1, BMP-2, BMP-11, and BMP-13, would minimize ground disturbance from road construction at streams, washes, and irrigation channels as well as reduce potential for erosion and sedimentation from stormwater draining from the substations. This would reduce indirect impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources as a result of erosion to less than significant.

Impact: *Unknown Human Remains*

Threshold: *Implementation of the proposed Project would not result in the disturbance of human remains.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would not disturb known human remains. The land use designations for the Project components do not include cemetery uses, and no known human remains exist within the Project area. However, since the nature of the Project would involve ground-disturbing activities, it is possible that such actions could unearth, expose, or disturb previously unknown human remains. In the event that human remains are discovered during construction activities, the human remains could be inadvertently damaged, which could be a significant impact (DEIR pp. 3.5-31).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measure outlined below would reduce the Project's potential impact to currently unknown human remains to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-5 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure CUL-5 states:

If human remains are encountered during the course of construction, work in the immediate area shall be halted, a 100-foot diameter buffer established, and arrangements made to protect the remains in place until their disposition has been arranged according to this section. The treatment of human remains and associated and unassociated funerary objects discovered during any ground-disturbing activity shall comply with applicable State laws. This shall include immediate notification of the Riverside County coroner and, in the event of the coroner's determination that the human remains are Native American, notification of the California State Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), who shall appoint a Most Likely Descendant (MLD) (California Public Resources Code Section 5097.98). The Project Archaeologist, Applicant, County, and MLD shall make all reasonable efforts to develop an agreement for the treatment, with appropriate dignity, of human remains and associated and unassociated funerary objects (CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(d)). The agreement should take into consideration the appropriate excavation, removal, recordation, analysis, custodianship, curation, and final disposition of the human remains and associated and unassociated funerary objects. The Public Resources Code allows 48 hours to reach agreement on these matters. If the MLD and the other parties do not agree on the reburial method, Public Resources Code Section 5097.98(b) shall be followed: "the landowner or his or her authorized representative shall reinter the human remains and items associated with Native American burials with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further subsurface disturbance." Should any dispute arise, the County will request that the NAHC act to mediate the dispute. The site of any reburial of Native American human remains or cultural artifacts shall remain confidential, shall not be

disclosed, and shall not be governed by public disclosure requirements of the California Public Records Act (California Government Code Section 6250). No construction activities will be allowed within 100 feet of the discovery site of human remains until a Notice to Proceed is provided by the County.

Timing/Implementation: Implemented during construction activities

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measure would reduce the Project's impact to currently unknown human remains to less than significant by requiring the halt or diversion of construction and CEQA and other requirements implemented in the event that prehistoric or historic resources/human remains are discovered on the portion of the Project site under County jurisdiction. In the event of inadvertent discovery of human remains on the Project site, Mitigation Measure CUL-5 would require work to stop, a 100-foot-diameter buffer established, and arrangements made to protect the remains in place until their disposition has been arranged. Construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning activities would occur in full compliance with the Mitigation Measure CUL-5 and with all applicable standards and requirements.

Impact: *Historic or Archaeological Site*

Threshold: *Implementation of the proposed Project would not result in the alteration or destruction of an historic or archaeological site.*

1. Project Impact(s):

   The Project would have the potential to significantly impact historical resources and unique archaeological resources due to ground-disturbing activities associated with Project construction (DEIR pp. 3.5-31).

2. Mitigation:

   The Mitigation Measure identified below would reduce the Project's potential impact to currently unknown human remains to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated

into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4 and HYD -1 through HYD-4 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (also identified above) would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's impact to historic and archaeological resources to less than significant through the use of environmental monitoring during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning, and through the preparation of a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP) for any cultural resources that can be avoided during construction. Implementation of Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-4, in conjunction with BMP-14, which restricts vehicle traffic to designated roadways, would reduce direct impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources to less than significant. Mitigation Measures CUL-1 and CUL-2, which require tribal involvement and tribal monitoring of ground-disturbing construction activity, were developed, in part, as an outcome of Native American consultation efforts, where several tribes stressed the sensitivity of the area, and at least one tribe, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, recommended tribal monitoring during construction. Project grading could potentially temporarily alter naturally occurring drainage patterns and result in soil erosion, sedimentation, long-term siltation, and increased stormwater runoff, which could result in indirect impacts to historical resources and/or unique archaeological resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4, in conjunction with BMP-1, BMP-2, BMP-11, and BMP-13, would minimize ground disturbance from road construction at streams, washes, and irrigation channels as well as reduce potential for erosion and sedimentation from stormwater draining from the substations. This would reduce indirect impacts to historical resources and unique archaeological resources as a result of erosion to less than significant.

D. Geology and Soils

Impact: *Expose People or Structures to Substantial Adverse Effects Involving Strong Seismic Groundshaking*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death, involving strong seismic ground shaking.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Due to the potential for severe ground shaking along the faults located within the Project area, the site may be subject to moderately intense earthquake-related ground shaking at some point during the Project's operating lifetime (DEIR pp. 3.6-16 to 3.6-17).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures outlined below would reduce the Project's impact associated with seismic ground shaking to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 and GEO-2 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level (DEIR pp. 3.6-24).

Mitigation Measure GEO-1 states:

Prior to final design and construction, a site-specific subsurface geotechnical evaluation/report shall be prepared to evaluate the potential ground-shaking hazard, which would meet the requirements of the most recent version of the California Building Code. A state certified Project geologist shall ensure appropriate structural design and mitigation techniques achieve adequate protection according to industry standards and building code requirements.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to final Project design

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure GEO-2 states:

Should future data suggest the presence of active faulting at the Project area, a fault evaluation may be performed. Mitigation of potential fault rupture hazard would typically include locating improvements away from the trace of an active fault, designing structures for an acceptable amount of movement, or implementing systems to maintain safety and that allow for displacement that could be repaired.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to final Project design

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with seismic ground shaking to less than significant by requiring the incorporation of site-specific geotechnical study results into final design consistent with County requirements and state building code. Should future data suggest the presence of active faulting at the Project area, a fault evaluation would also be conducted pursuant to these mitigation measures.

Impact: *Liquefaction*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death, involving liquefaction.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The liquefaction potential within the Project area is low, and there would be a less-than-significant impact related to liquefaction. However, the geotechnical report recommends subsequent geotechnical work to determine site specific parameters for foundation design and engineering including confirmation of findings with respect to liquefaction potential. Potential impacts related to liquefaction and liquefaction-induced settlement would be potentially significant (DEIR pp. 3.6-17).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 outlined above and below would reduce the Project's impact associated with liquefaction to a less-than-significant level. The

Mitigation Measures reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure GEO-3 states:

Based on the nature, location and severity of adverse soil conditions, the geotechnical study shall recommend appropriate and feasible design features necessary to reduce the potential for liquefiable, expansive, corrosive, or collapsible soils, as necessary, to adversely affect Project facilities. Such measures might include removal of loose soil layers to be replaced with compacted fill or specialized foundation design, including the use of deep foundation systems, to support structures in accordance with industry standards and building code requirements.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to final Project design

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 through GEO-3 would ensure future provisions with regard to an in-depth geotechnical study be performed which would recommend appropriate and feasible design features necessary to reduce the potential for liquefiable, expansive, or corrosive soils. Impacts would be reduced to less than significant.

Impact: *Result in Substantial Erosion or the Loss of Topsoil*

Threshold: *The Project would not be susceptible to wind and water erosion which could result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project site contains soils that could be susceptible to wind and water erosion during construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning (DEIR pp. 3.6-18 to 3.6-19).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4, outlined below, would reduce the Project's impact associated with erosion or the loss of topsoil to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. These mitigation measures are also stated under the discussion for B. Biological Resources above.

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 through HYD-4 would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with erosion and loss of topsoil by requiring the implementation of a comprehensive Drainage, Erosion, and Sedimentation Control Plan, which would identify site surface water runoff patterns and implement temporary soil and erosion control Best Management Practices to prevent excessive and unnatural soil deposition and erosion throughout Project-related construction areas and downslope of the Project Area.

Impact: *Unstable Geologic Units or Soils*

Threshold: *The Project would not be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the Project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Soil units underlying the Project site are potentially susceptible to subsidence. Based on the geotechnical report, the Project is geotechnically feasible provided that the recommendations in the geotechnical report are incorporated into the preliminary design of the Project (DEIR pp. 3.6-19 to 3.6-20).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3, outlined above would reduce the Project's impact associated with unstable geologic units or soils to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. These mitigation measures are also stated above in this section.

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with unstable geologic units or soils by requiring the incorporation of site-specific geotechnical study results into final design consistent with County requirements and state building code. The site-specific subsurface geotechnical evaluation would be required to assess the potential for subsidence and/or the presence of earth fissures underlying the Project area and recommend appropriate and feasible design features if necessary.

Impact: *Expansive Soils*

Threshold: *The Project would not be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life and property.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Soils within the Project site consist of granular alluvial deposits, and therefore exhibit low shrink/swell potential. However, if expansive soils are present on the site, they could cause damage to proposed facilities (DEIR pp. 3.6-20 to 3.6-21).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 would reduce the Project's impact associated with expansive soils to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation

Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. These mitigation measures are also stated above in this section.

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-1 through GEO-3 would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with expansive soils by requiring the incorporation of site-specific geotechnical study results into final design consistent with County requirements and state building code.

Impact: *Septic Tanks*

Threshold: *The Project would not have soils that are incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water or result in grading that affects or negates subsurface sewage disposal systems.*

1. Project Impact(s):

   The Project would include the construction of a septic tank to treat domestic wastewater from the O&M building, which would require soils capable to adequately supporting the use of septic tanks (DEIR pp. 3.6-21).

2. Mitigation:

   The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

   Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-4 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure GEO-4 states:

Removal of loose soil layers shall be replaced with compacted fill or specialized foundation design, including the use of deep foundation systems, to support structures. The septic system shall be placed in soils capable of adequately supporting the septic system as determined by the Project Geologist and in accordance with County requirements specified in the Department of Environmental Health Technical Guidance Manual.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to final Project design

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of Mitigation Measures GEO-4 would ensure compliance with septic rank requirements and would ensure the septic tank is placed in soils capable of adequately supporting the septic system. As part of the septic system permit requirements described in the above Mitigation Measure, the system would be required to be placed in soil capable of adequately supporting the septic system.

E. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Impact: *Transport, Use, or Disposal of Hazardous Materials*

Threshold: *The Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes associated with the Project could result in potential adverse health and environmental impacts if these materials were used, stored, or disposed of improperly, causing accidents and spills. Potential direct and indirect impacts of such releases could degrade soil and water quality or expose humans and wildlife to the harmful effects of hazardous materials (DEIR pp. 3.8-25 to 3.8-30).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measures outlined below would reduce Project-related hazards associated with the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials to a less-than-

significant level. The Mitigation Measures reflect changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measures: Implementation of Mitigation Measures HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level (DEIR pp. 3.8-41 to 3.8-42).

Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 states:

Prior to issuance of a grading permit, a Phase II soil investigation shall be prepared by a qualified environmental consultant to evaluate the potential presence of residual pesticides or herbicides from past agricultural land uses. The investigation shall be in accordance with the recommendations of the November 27, 2012 Kennedy Jenks Phase I report. Any soils found to contain residual contaminants in exceedance of regulatory action levels that are determined by the consultant to represent a potential hazard to construction workers or future workers and visitors shall be removed from the site in accordance with Riverside County Department of Environmental Health oversight.

Timing/Implementation: Submitted prior to issuance of grading permit

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 states:

Worker Environmental Awareness Program. The Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) shall include a personal protective equipment (PPE) program, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) to address health and safety issues associated with normal and unusual (emergency) conditions. Construction-related safety programs and procedures shall include a respiratory protection program, among other things. Construction would be undertaken sequentially in accordance with a Construction Plan that shall include the final design documents, work plan, health and safety plans, permits, project schedule,

and operation and maintenance manuals. Construction Plan documents shall relate at least to the following:

1. Environmental health and safety training (including, but not limited, to training on the hazards of Valley Fever, including the symptoms, proper work procedures, how to use PPE, and informing supervisor of suspected symptoms of work-related Valley Fever)
2. Site security measures
3. Site first aid training
4. Construction testing (non-destructive examination, hydro, etc.) requirements
5. Site fire protection and extinguisher maintenance, guidance, and documentation
6. Furnishing and servicing of sanitary facilities records
7. Trash collection and disposal schedule/records
8. Disposal of hazardous materials and waste guidance in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations

Timing/Implementation: Submitted prior to commencement of construction activities

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measures would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials to less than significant by requiring the implementation of a Phase II report to evaluate the potential presence of pesticides or herbicides, and establish a WEAP, which would further reduce wildfire risks and reduce the risk of contracting Valley Fever through the inclusion of a personal protective equipment (PPE) program, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and an Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP).

Impact: *Airport Land Use Plan*

Threshold: *The Project is located within an airport land use plan and would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project is located within the Blythe Municipal Airport Influence Area (AIA), and is required to adhere to FAA Part 77 review, which includes a review of projects for the potential for incompatible land uses that are proposed within the area of influence. The Applicant also submitted tower structure locations and other relevant Project features to the FAA for formal hazard determination under 49 U.S.C. Section 1501; 13 CFR Part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace. The FAA conducted an aeronautical study in 2012 and found that these gen-tie towers would not be a hazard to air navigation. However, the determination expired on February 9, 2014, and will require resubmittal (DEIR pp. 3.8-30 to 3.8-34).

2. Mitigation:

The Mitigation Measure outlined below would reduce the Project-related hazards associated with Blythe Municipal Airport to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the Project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-3 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure HAZ-3 states:

Prior to issuance of a grading or building permit, the Applicant shall submit all required plans and proposals to the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission (RCALUC) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for Title 14 CFR Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 77 review. Commencement of construction shall not begin prior to final approval from RCALUC and FAA with any modifications required as part of the review incorporated into project design.

Timing/Implementation: Prior to issuance of a grading or building permit

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measure would ensure compliance with the applicable Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan associated with the RCALUC and FAA by requiring all plans and proposals be submitted to the Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission (RCALUC) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for Title 14 CFR Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 77 review and approval.

Impact: *Wildland Fires*

Threshold: *The Project would not expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The solar facility would be designed and constructed to industry safety design standards (i.e., Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, National Electric Code) and Riverside County Building and Safety Department requirements to reduce the risk of electrical fires at the site. However, there is the potential risk for wildland fires to occur at the site (DEIR pp. 3.8-34 to 3.8-35).

2. Mitigation:

The implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 would reduce Project-related impacts associated with wildland fires to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measures HAZ-2 is also stated above in this section.

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County.

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measure would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with the potential to expose people or structures

to significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires to less than significant by requiring implementation of the WEAP, which includes construction-related safety programs and procedures associated with site fire protection. The solar facility would be designed and constructed to industry safety design standards (i.e., Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, National Electric Code) and Riverside County Building and Safety Department requirements to reduce the risk of electrical fires at the site. Solar arrays are fire-resistant, as they are constructed largely out of steel, glass, aluminum, or components housed within steel enclosures. Substation equipment and inverters would be sited on concrete foundations and inverters would be housed in steel and concrete equipment enclosures, minimizing the risk of electrical sparks that could ignite during equipment failure. The construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the PVMSP would result in a minimal increased risk of wildfires in the Project area. Regardless, the PVMSP would comply with all applicable wildland fire management plans and policies established by CAL FIRE and the Riverside County Fire Department. Further, a Fire Management and Protection Plan would be prepared in consultation with the Riverside County Fire Department and other appropriate first responders to reduce the risk of an electrical fire on-site. Therefore, the PVMSP would result in less than significant impacts to safety hazards for people residing and working in and around the Blythe Municipal Airport and Project area with implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-3.

Impact: *Other Hazard Issues of Concern*

Threshold: *The Project would not create other hazard issues of concern that would result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment.*

1. Project Impact(s):

The Project would result in potential impacts to the public health of residents of Riverside County with respect to electric and magnetic fields (EMF). Agricultural workers could potentially be exposed to EMF.

Gen-tie line-related radio-frequency interference is one of the indirect effects of Project operation. Interference may be produced by the physical interactions of line electric fields. Such interference is due to the radio noise produced by the action of the electric fields on the surface of the energized conductor.

Hazardous shocks are those that could result from direct or indirect contact between an individual and an energized power line. No design-specific federal regulations have been established to prevent hazardous shocks from overhead power lines.

Standard fire prevention and suppression measures would be implemented for the proposed Project. O&M buildings would be designed with fire protection systems based on applicable Riverside County and City of Blythe requirements.

Further, the construction of the PVMSP would occur in an area favorable to the growth of Valley Fever (DEIR pp. 3.8-35 to 3.8-39).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 would reduce Project-related impacts associated with electric and magnetic fields, interference with radio-frequency, fire hazard, and valley fever. Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or substantially lessen the potentially significant impact as identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091(a)(1)).

Mitigation Measure: Implementation of Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation Measures HAZ-2 is also stated above in this section.

Enforcement/Monitoring: Riverside County.

Rationale: Implementation of the above Mitigation Measure would reduce the Project's potential impact associated with other hazard issues of concern. The implementation of the WEAP would include a personal protective equipment (PPE) program, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and an Injury and Illness Prevention

Program (IIPP) to address health and safety issues associated with normal and unusual (emergency) conditions.

F. Hydrology and Water Quality

Impact: *Violate Water Quality Standards or Waste Discharge Requirements during Construction*

Threshold: *The Project would not violate water quality standard or waste discharge regulation.*

1. Project Impact(s):

Construction activities would potentially loosen existing surface soils and sediments, increasing the potential for erosion during storm events. Additionally, the use of construction equipment may involve the accidental release of fuel, oils, brake dust, lubricants, antifreeze, and other potentially hazardous substances at the construction site. These water quality pollutants could become entrained in surface water during storm events, and/or be infiltrated into groundwater and the underlying aquifer, resulting in the degradation of water quality. Further, construction of Pole 43 and the access road would result in a maximum of 0.849 acre of temporary disturbance and 0.002 acre of permanent disturbance to an existing ephemeral stream, which is tributary to the Colorado River, a Traditional Navigable Water of the United States. Because construction of Pole 43 would result in a discharge of dredged material into waters of the United States, a USACE permit would be required pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1344; 33 CFR Parts 323 and 330) (DEIR pp. 3.9-17 to 3.9-19).

2. Mitigation:

Mitigation Measures HYD-1 and BIO-9 would reduce Project-related impacts associated with water quality standards and waste discharge requirements to a less-than-significant level. The Mitigation Measure reflects changes or alterations that the County has required, or incorporated into, the project that would avoid or