

CHAPTER 7.0
EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE
SIGNIFICANT

7.0 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

CEQA Guidelines §15128 requires that an EIR contain a brief statement disclosing the reasons why various possible significant effects of the Proposed Action, Alternative 1 - Double Circuit Gen-tie Line Structures, Alternative 2- Reduced CSE Facility Site, and Alternative 3 - Use Existing Electric Line Towers and 230-kV Line Looping and Undercrossing were found not to be significant and, therefore, would not be discussed in detail in the EIR/EA. The environmental issues not expected to have a significant impact as a result of the Proposed Action, Alternative 1 - Double Circuit Gen-tie Line Structures, Alternative 2- Reduced CSE Facility Site, and Alternative 3 - Use Existing Electric Line Towers and 230-kV Line Looping and Undercrossing were scoped out as part of the Initial Study. These are described in detail in Chapter 1.0, subsection 1.13 and are briefly summarized below.

The analysis provided in Sections 4.1 through 4.15 identified no adverse impacts for the Proposed Action, Alternative 1 - Double Circuit Gen-tie Line Structures, Alternative 2- Reduced CSE Facility Site, or Alternative 3 - Use Existing Electric Line Towers and 230-kV Line Looping and Undercrossing in the following resource and issue areas: Visual Resources, Land Use and Special Designations, Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Climate Change, Noise, Hydrology and Water Quality, Environmental Justice and Recreation.

The Alternative 4 - No Action/No Project Alternative would not involve any construction on the project site. Therefore, no effects on any of the resource and issue areas were identified in Sections 4.1 through 4.15.

AESTHETICS (VISUAL RESOURCES)

The proposed project site is not near any scenic vista or scenic highway, nor does it appear that it would damage or degrade any existing scenic resources. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue area.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

The land is currently zoned A-2 (General Agriculture), A-2-R (General Agricultural Rural Zone) and A-3 (Heavy Agriculture) and is designated by the General Plan as "Agriculture." Solar energy facilities are allowed within these zones subject to a Conditional Use Permit. Thus, the project does not conflict with existing zoning for agriculture and no impact is identified for this issue area.

There are no existing forest lands, timberlands, or timberland zoned Timberland Production either on-site or in the immediate vicinity that would conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area. There are no existing forest lands either on-site or in the immediate vicinity of the site. The proposed project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.

HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The project site is not: 1) within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area; 2) listed as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code, Section 65962.5; 3) within two miles of a public airport or a private airstrip. Thus, no impact is identified for these issue areas.

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The proposed circulation plan for the project site will be required to provide emergency access points and safe vehicular travel. In addition, local building codes would be followed to minimize flood, seismic, and fire hazard. Thus, the proposed project would not impair the implementation or physically interfere with any adopted emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans. No impact is identified for this issue area.

The project site is not characterized as an area of urban/wildland interface. According to the Imperial County Natural Hazard Disclosure (Fire) Map prepared by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (2000) the project site does not fall into an area characterized as either: (1) a wildland area that may contain substantial forest fire risk and hazard; or (2) very high fire hazard severity zone. Thus, the project site would not expose people or structures to significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fire and no impact is identified for this issue area.

HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

The project does not propose the placement of housing or structures within a 100-year flood hazard area. Thus, no impact is identified for these issue areas.

No bays or lakes are within a two-mile radius of the project site and the project site is over 100 miles from the Pacific Ocean. In addition, the project site is relatively flat and level. Therefore, there is no potential for the project site to be inundated by seiches, tsunamis, or mudflows. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue.

LAND USE

The proposed project does not physically divide any established community. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue area.

MINERAL RESOURCES

According to the Conservation and Open Space Element of the County of Imperial General Plan, no known mineral resources occur within the project site nor does the project site contain mapped mineral resources. As such, the proposed project would not adversely affect the availability of any known mineral resources within the project site. Thus, no impact is identified for these issue areas.

NOISE

The project site is not within two miles of a public airport or a private airstrip. Thus, no impacts have been identified for these issue areas.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

Two single-family residences (on parcels 052-170-018 and 052-170-076) are on the site and are planned to be demolished and removed. A mobile home on parcel 052-170-058 will be removed prior to construction. The project does not propose the development of housing. The project would require approximately 5 to 7 full-time personnel for operations and maintenance of the solar facility. Accordingly, substantial population growth is not anticipated as the number of employees required to operate and maintain the facility is minimal. Therefore, no impact is identified for these issue areas.

PUBLIC SERVICES

SCHOOLS AND PARKS

The proposed solar facility would not result in a substantial increase in population. The project does not contain a residential component which would result in additional population. The proposed project would not create an increase need of schools as no students would be generated by the project. Likewise, no parks are needed because the project is not a residential use that would generate demand for parks. As such, the proposed project would not have an adverse physical effect on the environment because the project does not require new or significantly altered services or facilities to be constructed with regards to schools and parks. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.

FIRE PROTECTION

The Imperial County Fire Department (ICFD) provides fire protection and emergency medical services to unincorporated portions of the County. The project includes provision of on-site fire protection features including up to nine, 10,000-gallon firewater tanks located throughout the solar field. PV modules are typically Class C fire-rated and the remainder of the equipment is of nonflammable material (aluminum, steel, and glass). The solar field will be maintained with a minimum of vegetation and other combustible materials. Buildings in the common services areas of the CSE Facility will be designed with fire protection systems based on applicable Imperial County requirements. Access roads will provide emergency access throughout the solar field. Therefore, the proposed project would not have an adverse physical effect on the environment because the project does not require new or significantly altered fire protection services or facilities to be constructed. Therefore, no impact is identified for fire protection.

POLICE PROTECTION

The project site is in the Imperial County Sheriff's Department South County Patrol Division service area. The proposed project, as a renewable energy project, would not result in an increase in residential uses in the Imperial County Sheriff's Department's service area. The project anticipates a total of seven full-time employees. Various safety and security equipment will be installed to prevent unwanted access, including a security fence surrounding the entire perimeter of the CSE Facility. During unstaffed hours (such as nighttime), a third party security service would be hired to monitor the CSE Facility. In the solar field, security lighting would be provided at the gates, canal and drain crossings, and other locations where necessary for security or safety. With these features installed on-site, security on the solar facility would be adequate and would not require the addition of staff to the Imperial County Sheriff's Department. The proposed project would thus not have an adverse physical effect on the environment because the project does not require new or significantly altered police services or facilities to be constructed. Therefore, no impact is identified for police service.

RECREATION

The proposed project is a solar facility and would not create a demand for recreation or parks in the County. Thus, no impact is identified for recreation as it relates to existing neighborhood and regional parks or the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Recreation as it relates to affecting access to recreational facilities located on BLM land is discussed in Sections 3.15 and 4.15.

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TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

The proposed project would not result in changes to existing air traffic patterns through an increase in traffic levels or change in location. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue area.

The proposed project would not conflict with any adopted policies, plans, or programs regarding public transit, bicycle, or pedestrian facilities, or otherwise decrease the performance or safety of such facilities. Thus, no impact is identified for this issue area.

UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Domestic wastewater from the operations and maintenance building is expected to be limited in volume due to the few staff members (five to seven) required on-site. The CSE Facility will collect wastewater generated in the operations and maintenance building and convey it to an on-site sanitary waste septic system and leach field. Alternatively, wastewater may be conveyed to an underground tank for storage until it is pumped out, on a periodic or as-needed basis, and transported for disposal at a licensed waste treatment facility. Thus, a less than significant impact is identified for impacts associated with exceeding wastewater treatment requirements.

Wastewater would likely be treated on-site or alternatively may be stored for removal and treatment off-site. No municipal wastewater treatment provider would be affected. Therefore, no impact to a wastewater treatment provider would occur.

WATER TREATMENT

Water will be needed for domestic and industrial use, solar panel washing and fire protection. Industrial water will be supplied to the project under an industrial service water agreement with the Imperial Irrigation District. A 200,000 gallon raw water storage tank and a 200,000 gallon treated water storage tank will be placed at the common service area to protect against interruptions in water service and to provide storage capacity for fire suppression. Additionally up to nine, 10,000-gallon firewater tanks will be distributed throughout the solar field. Potable water supply would be provided from a bottled water or similar water delivery service. Provision of water treatment is included as part of the proposed project and the environmental impacts of constructing the treatment plant are addressed in Sections 4.1 through 4.15 of this EIR/EA. Thus, a less than significant impact is identified for impacts associated with construction of new water or water treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities.

STORMWATER FACILITIES

No municipal stormwater drainage facilities are in the project area. The project would not drastically alter existing drainage patterns and no new or expanded stormwater drainage facilities would be required. Therefore, no impact would with regard to stormwater facilities.

WATER SUPPLY

Under Senate Bill (SB) 610, a water supply assessment (WSA) must be furnished to local governments for inclusion in any environmental documentation for certain projects (as defined in the California Water Code Section 10912) subject to CEQA. The WSA is included on the attached CD of Technical Appendices in **Appendix A** of this EIR/EA. Water supply is available from IID, and project demand is projected far

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below existing quantities used for agricultural irrigation on this site, no impact would occur regarding water supply during both construction and operation and maintenance of the project.

SOLID WASTE

During operations of the proposed project, waste generation will be minor. Solid waste will be handled by a locally-licensed waste hauling service for disposal at a landfill. Eight landfills are in Imperial County, including Allied Imperial Landfill, approximately 15 miles north of the project site. Thus, a less than significant impact is identified regarding sufficient landfill capacity to meet the project's solid waste needs.

Solid wastes generated during operation of the project will be handled by a locally-licensed waste hauling service for disposal at a landfill. No impacts would occur regarding federal, state and local statutes regarding solid waste.