

**SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION  
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM**

This form and the descriptive information in the application package constitute the contents of Initial Study pursuant to County Guidelines under Ordinance 3040 and Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

**PROJECT LABEL:**

<b>APNs:</b>	0646-041-08 (all), -09 (portion), -16 (portion), -17 (portion)	<b>USGS Quad:</b>	Danby Lake
<b>Applicant:</b>	Valley Salt, LLC	<b>T, R, Section:</b>	T1N, R18E, 10, 11, 14, 15
<b>Location</b>	Approximately 43 miles west of Parker, Arizona and 55 miles east of 29 Palms in southeastern San Bernardino County, California	<b>Thomas Bros</b>	Map E, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties (2013)
<b>Project No:</b>	PROJ-2020-00107	<b>Community Plan:</b>	N/A
<b>Rep</b>	Lilburn Corporation	<b>LUC: Zone:</b>	Resource/Land Management (RLM) Resource Conservation
<b>Proposal:</b>	Operation of a sodium or salt mine on 481 acres located entirely on BLM land for up to 51 years.	<b>Overlays:</b>	N/A

**PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Lead agency:** County of San Bernardino  
Land Use Services Department  
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San Bernardino, CA 92415-0182

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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

**Summary**

Valley Salt, LLC (Valley Salt) has submitted a Reclamation Plan for their Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease (CALA 0 139523) mining and processing operations and reclamation on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed public lands in compliance with the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (PRC Section 2710 et seq., "SMARA"). SMARA is implemented by the County of San Bernardino (County) through County Development Code Chapter 88.03. The County jurisdiction of the site is related to the Reclamation Plan, while the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provides authorization for the operating and reclamation of the site.

The Danby Dry Lake lease area (Project Site) consists of 1,883 acres within the Danby Dry Lake. It is located approximately 43 miles west of Parker, Arizona and 55 miles east of 29 Palms in southeastern San Bernardino County, California (see Figure 1). The operations are located within

portions of Sections 10, 11, 14, and 15, Township 1 North, Range 18 East, San Bernardino Base and Meridian. The Project Site is located entirely on public lands under the management of the BLM through the Needles Field Office. Valley Salt has submitted a Mining and Reclamation Plan to the BLM Needles office per 43 CFR Parts 3590 – 3596 Solid Minerals (other than coal) Exploration and Mining Operations. The Project Site is leased from the Federal government under Sodium Lease (CALA 0 139523). The current 10-year lease is scheduled to expire on November 30, 2022. Valley Salt is requesting an operating life of 51 years; one year through the current expiration date and 50 years contingent on approval of five additional 10-year leases with the BLM. All disturbance will be within Federal lands leased by Valley Salt. Surrounding land uses consist of vacant Federal lands administered by the BLM within the eastern Mojave Desert.

Salt deposits of the Danby Playa have been known since the 1880s and have been mined off and on over the last century. Valley Salt obtained the current sodium lease number in 2009 and renewed it for 10 years in 2012 and is in process of renewing another 10-year lease. Numerous unimproved roads, evaporation ponds, trenches, and other historical workings exist onsite and adjacent to the lease area. Valley Salt conducted exploration in 2009 to determine potential brine production areas and has been conducting limited (unauthorized) sodium production activities over the past few years.

Valley Salt currently plans on utilizing a series of shallow pits, brine wells and ponds to produce salt from rock salt and solar evaporation of brines on approximately 481 acres (mine site) within the lease area. The Project Site is currently zoned Resource Conservation within the land use category of Resource/Land Management (Countywide Policy Plan, November 2020). The site is accessed from State Route 62, 40 miles west from Parker, 10.5 miles northwest on Cadiz Road, and 1.5 miles to the project site on an unpaved road known as Salt Marsh Road (see Figure 2). The site is in the southern portion of Danby Dry Lake, a flat barren, sandy lake bed generally ranging from 600 to 615 feet above mean sea level (amsl).

#### Rate of Production

Valley Salt is proposing to mine rock salt and evaporated salts at a start-up rate of approximately 50 tons/hour (tph), 500 tons/day (tpd) on 200 operating days per year, for a total of approximately **100,000 tons** per year (tpy). Depending on future product demand, Valley Salt is proposing to increase production to 120 tph, 1,200 tpd on 250 operating days per year, and 300,000 tpy. At the start-up rate and operating 200 days per year (10 hours/day), four days /week and with a truck capacity of 25 tons, approximately 20 trucks/day would transport material to markets; 2 trucks/hour. **At 300,000 tpy**, approximately 50 trucks/day would transport material to markets; 5 trucks/hour. Approximately 5 to up to 20 employees would work on-site, typically working 4 – 10-hour shifts, Monday through Thursday. As production increases, a second shift or additional day may be added and/or shipping may be conducted on additional days.

Valley Salt is proposing to mine the sodium resources utilizing solar evaporation ponds (solar salt) and excavation of rock salt. The Mining Plan is detailed on Figure 3. Table 1 lists the existing or start-up facilities and activities and the planned future facilities.

#### Solar Salt

Evaporation ponds (approximately 10 to 20 acres each) will be constructed by pushing up and building berms out of native material (sand, dirt, and clay) around the ponds. The berms will be approximately 2 feet in height above grade and 2 feet below grade (for a total of 4 feet) and

approximately 15 feet wide at their base, 10 feet on its top with an access road on top, and with 2:1 slopes. The ponds will be lined with clay material within the pond excavation or brought

**Table 1**  
**Valley Salt Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**  
**Start-Up and Proposed Mining Activities (approx. acres)**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Existing Start-Up (acres)</b>	<b>Planned (acres)</b>	<b>Total Acres</b>
Evaporation Ponds	197 (not fully developed)	0	197
Shallow salt rock extraction pits	0	135 (includes existing 4 ac. of trenches)	135 (includes existing 4 ac. of trenches)
Trenches <sup>1</sup>	15 (4 ac. in NW to be reclaimed; 4 ac. in central area to be absorbed within new salt rock pits; 7 ac. to remain in plant area)	-(4) ac. (absorbed in salt rock pits)	11
Process Area with drying pads	41	22	63 (with trenches approx. 70 ac)
Roads, buffers, misc. areas	65	10 (5 acres to west to be reclaimed yr. 1)	75
<b>Totals</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>481</b>

Danby Dry Lake Reclamation Plan. Valley Salt June 2020.

Areas rounded to nearest whole acre.

1 – up to 110' wide (typ. 30'); excavated rock salt and native materials stockpiles on either side with protective berm; estimate up to 150-foot wide disturbance width. No new trenches are planned.

The ponds will be filled with brine from the existing trenches and production wells to a depth of approximately 12" to 24" to facilitate evaporation. Heavy equipment (dozers, loaders, excavators, dump trucks, belly scraper, etc.) will be used to construct the ponds.

Water wells will be drilled to access brine water to be pumped into the trench or directly into the ponds or used in the production process for washing of rock salt materials and dust control (adds moisture to material if needed). There are six existing operable wells; 3 to 4 in production as needed. The wells are approximately 100 feet deep with an 8-inch diameter perforated pipe. An additional seven wells are conceptually sited on the mine plan basically around the outside border of the ponds. The clay-lined ponds will be filled to a constant depth of 12" to 24" of brine. The sun and wind will evaporate the water and cause it to become more concentrated brine. Once the brine reaches 100% concentration it will be pumped out of the concentration pond and into a neighboring grow pond. Once in the grow pond, the water will remain there until evaporation occurs leaving solar salt that will be harvested with heavy equipment (scrapers, dozers, and loaders). Depending on the amount of moisture in the salt, some salt will be laid out onto drying pads consisting of 5 to 10 acres (size may vary) in the southwest corner of the mine site.

It is estimated that operations will use approximately 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm) of water (brine not fresh water) during production. Water will be drawn from the existing trenches but

mainly from the on-site brine production water wells. This water will also be used to wash the raw rock salt to remove the dirt and leave the sodium. No other substances or chemicals will be introduced into the raw minerals or water. No chemicals are used in the production process.

### Rock Salt

The expansion area north and west of the existing ponds will be excavated in shallow pits for the removal of rock salt. Rock salt typically ranges from 1-foot to 10 feet thick (typically 5 feet). The pits will be excavated to a depth of up to 10 feet or typically less depending on the thickness of the available rock salt. Side slopes will be less steep than 3H:1V. The rock salt pits will be extracted with heavy equipment and trucked to the processing area in the southwest portion of the site for crushing, screening, and washing as needed. Any overburden will be used for small safety berms around the pits as needed or simply backfilled behind the ongoing mining. Approximately 20% of the rock salt excavated is not usable for product and will be backfilled into the shallow pits to reduce slopes or used for roads or berms as needed. After completion and removal of rock salt from the shallow pits, they may be converted for use as solar evaporation ponds. As needed, the pits will be partially backfilled with available overburden, graded level, covered with a layer of clay and salts, and then filled with saline water for the production of evaporative salts.

### Salt Processing

The portable process or production plant consists of a typical series of crushers (2), screens (4), and conveyors and stackers (17 - 20; currently a smaller configuration is being used) to crush and size the salt product to desired sizes based on customer demands. The plant is currently powered by two 838 bhp generators and two small generators less than 50 bhp each power the residential trailers and other miscellaneous needs. Additional generators may be needed in the future and the BLM and County will be notified if additional units are brought on-site.

Raw rock salt is stockpiled on approx. 0.5 acres at the process plant feeder area. The production process of raw rock salt is first to screen it through a grizzly hopper sizing it to 4" minus sizes, and screening as much of the dirt and clay off the rock salt; then sending it through a jaw crusher to size it to ¾" minus. The material then runs through a coarse wash to knock off the big dirt pieces and then to a sand screw wash to clean it even more; and then through a final spray wash to rinse it for the last time. Brine water from the wells and existing trenches are used for the washing process and recycled back into the trenches and ponds. Most of the processed rock salt will go into large conical storage piles at the end of the radial stacker. The rock salt storage piles could be up to 50 feet high and cover approximately one acre depending on product demand. Some finer product is conveyed to and stored in storage structures made up of concrete block sides and polyethylene covers approximately 70 feet x 40 feet each.

Some of the processed rock salt at the end of the radial stacker as well as solar salt harvested from the ponds will be further processed by drying the salt in a rolling drum using ambient air only (no heated drum). After the salt is dried, it will be crushed in a roll crusher to size it smaller than ¾", then it will go through a final screen and placed into covered storage structures according to size specs.

The salt will be loaded by loaders onto commercial street-legal 25-ton haul trucks (typical) for transportation to the customers' location. Once the trucks traverse unpaved routes to be determined from the plant site to paved CA State Route 62 (SR-62), trucks will travel east to

US 95, then north to Las Vegas area or southeast to Phoenix area; or west to SR 177 to I-10 to customers in southern California.

#### Air Quality and Dust

All stationary equipment and the generators will comply with Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) rules and regulations and all necessary permits will be obtained prior to operation. Currently, Valley Salt has obtained permits for the “salt crushing, screening, and drying system” (Permit #B013098) and for two diesel powered generators rated at 838 brake-horse power each (bhp) (Permit #s B13412 a& B13413) and two small diesel generators to power the living quarters (<50 bhp). The crushing/screening/drying system is conditioned under its air quality permit to limit production to not exceed 300,000 tons/year.

Haul trucks and diesel heavy equipment will meet requirements of the California Air Resources Board’s (CARB) off-road diesel vehicles regulations to reduce diesel pollutants. Operations are required to comply with MDAQMD Rules 401 (limiting visible emissions from exhaust); 402 (avoid nuisance emissions); 403 prohibits visible dust from crossing property lines); and 403.2 (requires requirements for controlling fugitive dust). Water sprays and dust containment measures such as enclosures are required to control emissions. One to two water trucks will water spray the roads with brine and add salt gravel as needed to control dust. The salt water will act as a natural dust suppressant that is more effective than fresh water.

Most equipment will run on diesel fuel and electricity. Power will be produced by diesel fueled generators. Diesel fuel will be stored in a 10,000-gallon above-ground tank situated on an impervious concrete pad with 2-foot high catchment berms in case of a spill to contain the contents of the tank. The tank will be approximately 8 feet in diameter and 32 feet long (typical). A small portable gasoline tank will also be used onsite (approximately 240-gallon tank) along with 2-portable diesel double walled tanks. Fuel will be transferred to the site by tanker trucks. Equipment maintenance will be done onsite. Waste oil, lubricants and solvents will be removed from the site and disposed of at permitted facilities.

#### Public Safety

The mining of the rock salt and harvesting of the solar evaporated salt does not produce any hazardous waste. Any overburden material consisting of clays, sands, or other native materials will be used to construct the 4-foot high berms between the solar ponds, other road maintenance as needed, and for protective berms along the open trenches. Any remaining waste (overburden or non-spec salt materials) will be backfilled into the pits, trenches and pond areas when no longer needed. At the completion of operations, natural materials (not hazardous waste) or overburden materials will be graded into the pits and ponds to safe grades.

Access roads to the site will be posted with signs informing the public of mine truck traffic and that they are entering a mining area with no trespassing allowed. Perimeter signs around the approved surface mine boundary shall be installed as shown on plan and shall read in English and Spanish “Active Mine Area, Keep Out” and “No Trespassing.” The open trenches will be surrounded with protective berms of at least 4 feet in height and 8 feet at their base to limit access by the public and wildlife. The existing trenches to the northwest will be backfilled and reclaimed within the first year after project approval. Warning signs will be placed every 300 feet along the berm and on any access roads leading on-site and along open trenches. No other openings or exist are proposed.

### Cleanup

At the completion of mining activities, all equipment, wells, and structures will be removed within two years. Surface material in all compacted working areas, stockpile, and processing areas will be loosened by mechanical means. All debris will be removed and disposed at a permitted facility. The pits, ponds and trenches will be backfilled with their surrounding berm material and the area graded level to as close to existing elevations as possible with available material leaving no unsafe slopes so that the public and wildlife would not be injured if they were to traverse the area.

Upon final reclamation, all on-site wells will be closed or destroyed in accordance with the California Department of Water Resources Bulletin 74-91 as revised in 1988 or the latest revision and with the San Bernardino County Department of Environmental Health (DEHS) regulations to the satisfaction of the authorized BLM officer. The wells will be closed in such a manner that will no longer be a hazard to the health and safety of people and wildlife. In addition, all underground or buried pipes and wiring will be removed and disposed of properly and any trenches will be back filled to grade.

### **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting**

The Project Site is surrounded by vacant, open desert lands. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (MWD) Iron Mtn. Pumping Station and Colorado River Aqueduct are located about 3.5 miles to the southwest. The BLM has prepared and approved (September 2016) a comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan as part of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). The existing and surrounding BLM designations for the Danby Dry Lake sodium lease area per the LUPA are the following:

- Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
- Ward Valley Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA); and
- LUPA-MIN-1: High Potential Mineral Area (defined as "*These areas have been identified as mineral lands having existing and/or historic mining activity and a reasonable probability of future mineral resource development. These identified areas will be designated as mineral land polygons on DRECP maps, recognized as probable future development areas for planning purposes and allowable use areas.*")

Note that the original Mine and Reclamation Plan (and the survey areas for the biological and cultural resources) included two optional alternative access routes to the east and south and a planned 80-acre clay borrow pit to the northeast of the ponds. These features have been eliminated from the current Mine and Reclamation Plan. A number of potential impacts to desert tortoise habitat and migratory birds were evaluated for these areas and the BLM and applicant determined to avoid these areas in the current project description. In addition, the potential new access roads to the east and south could affect the DRECP Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage ACEC. In order to avoid mainly additional biological impacts, the current project stays within its BLM salt lease area in the dry lake bed and is within the DRECP designated "High Potential Mineral Area." (defined as "*These areas have been identified as mineral lands having existing and/or historic mining activity and a reasonable probability of future mineral resource development. These identified areas will be designated as mineral land polygons on DRECP*")

maps, recognized as probable future development areas for planning purposes and allowable use areas.”)

<b>Existing Land Use and Land Use Category (Countywide Policy Plan 2020)</b>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>Existing Land Use</b>	<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Zoning</b>
<b>Project Site</b>	Undeveloped and Vacant	Resource/Land Management (RLM)	Resource Conservation (RC)
North	Undeveloped and Vacant	Resource/Land Management	Resource Conservation
South	Undeveloped and Vacant	Resource/Land Management	Resource Conservation
East	Undeveloped and Vacant	Resource/Land Management	Resource Conservation
West	Undeveloped and Vacant	Resource/Land Management	Resource Conservation

***Project Site Location, Existing Site Land Uses and Conditions***

The Project Site is located in a remote vacant area of southeastern San Bernardino County, 55 miles east of Twentynine Palms, 50 miles northwest of Blythe, and 53 miles southwest of Needles. It consists almost entirely of undeveloped open space, occupying flat to gently-sloped terrain comprised of unvegetated dry lakebed (Danby Playa) surrounded by sparsely-vegetated sand dunes. Most of the Project Site is relatively undisturbed, with disturbances on site consisting primarily of the existing mining operations, which include ponds, trenches, unpaved access roads, temporary structures, equipment, and material stockpiles.

**ADDITIONAL APPROVAL POTENTIALLY EQUIRED BY OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES**

Federal: BLM Mine and Reclamation Plan43 CFR 3590 regulations

State of California: California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife 1602 Lafe Alteration Agreement (if applicable)

County of San Bernardino: Land Use Services Department-Building and Safety, Public Health-Environmental Health Services and Public Works.

Regional: Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District.

Local: None

**CONSULTATION WITH CALIFORNIA NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES**

Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?

On January 15, 2021, the County of San Bernardino mailed notification pursuant to AB52 to the following tribes: Colorado River Indian Tribes, San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Morongo Band of Mission Indians, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians, and San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. Requests for consultations were due to the County by February 15, 2021. The table below shows a summary of comments and responses.

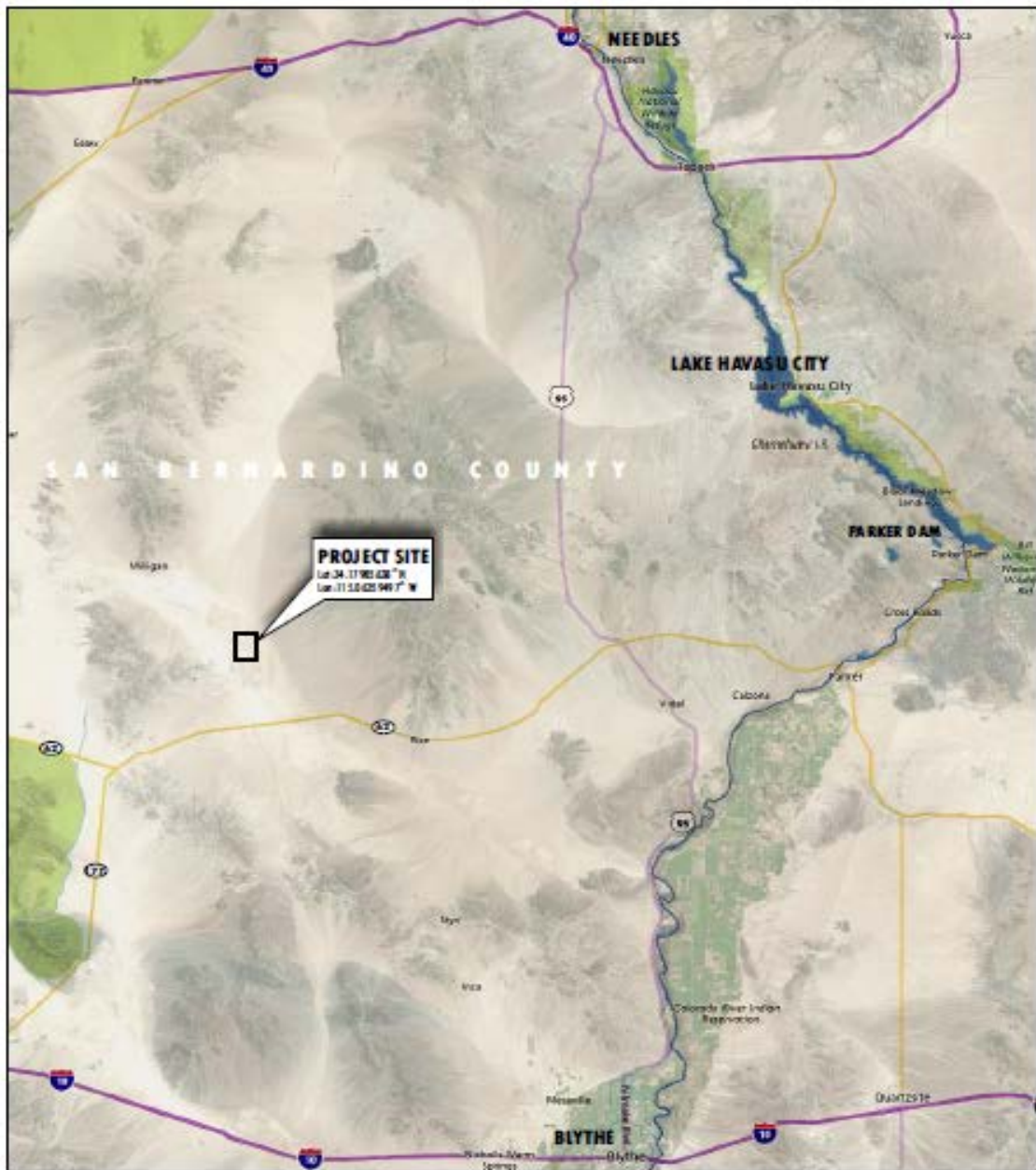
**AB 52 Consultation  
 Danby Dry Lake Sodium Mine**

<b>Tribe</b>	<b>Comment Letter Received</b>	<b>Summary of Response</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians	February 15, 2021	Proposed Project is located outside of Serrano ancestral territory	No request for consultation.
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe (AhaMakav Cultural Society)	February 8, 2021	Requested consultation	Consultation ongoing

Note: Conducting consultation early in the CEQA process allows tribal governments, lead agencies, and project proponents to discuss the level of environmental review, identify and address potential adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources, and reduce the potential for delay and conflict in the environmental review process. (See Public Resources Code section 21083.3.2.) Information may also be available from the California Native American Heritage Commission’s Sacred Lands File per Public Resources Code section 5097.96 and the California Historical Resources Information System administered by the California Office of Historic Preservation. Please also note that Public Resources Code section 21082.3(c) contains provisions specific to confidentiality.



Figure 1 Regional Map

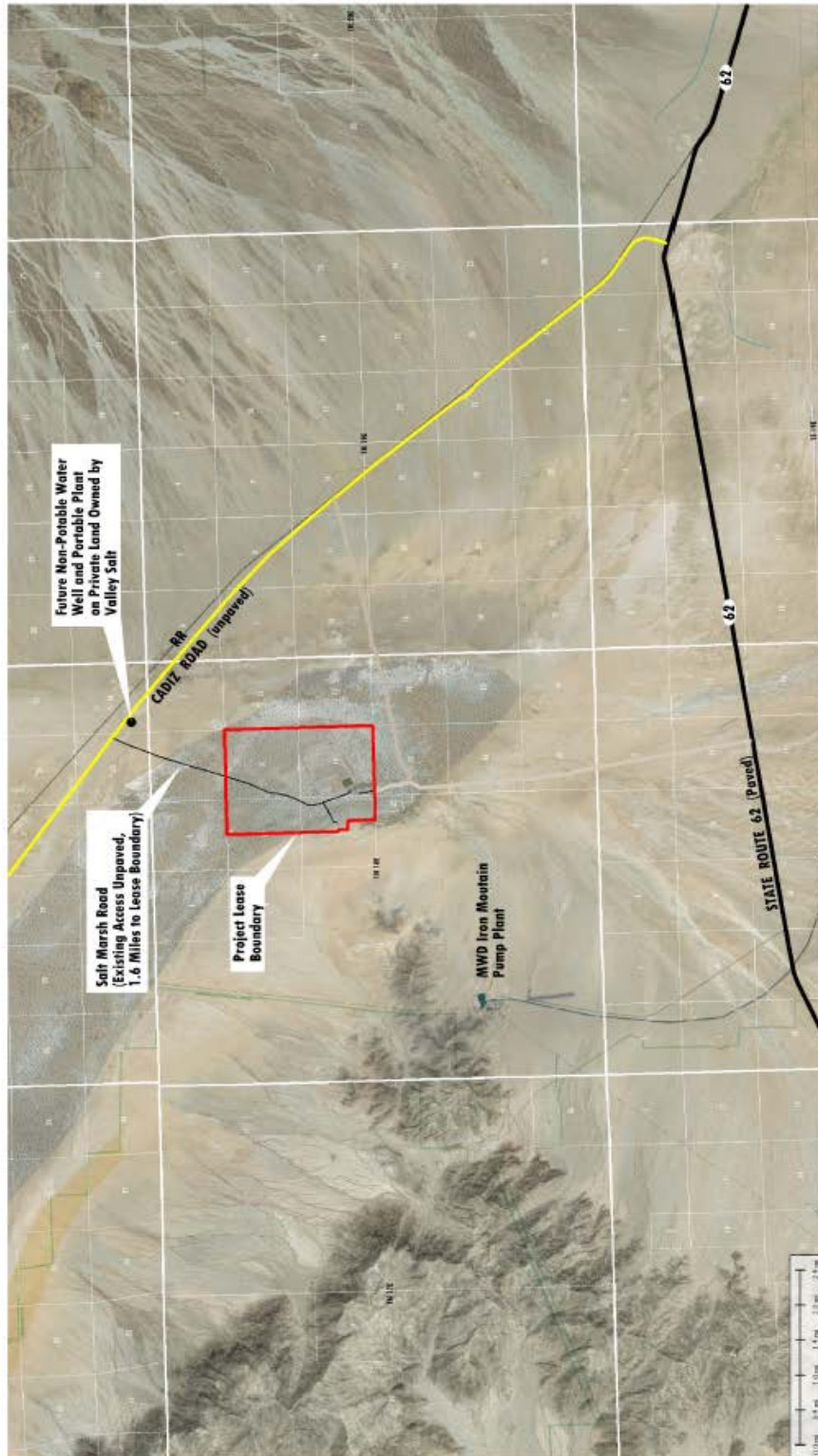


Proposed by  
**LILBURN**  
CORPORATION

**REGIONAL LOCATION**  
Valley Salt - Danby Dry Lake Operations  
Sodium Lease CALAD139523  
County of San Bernardino, CA

**FIGURE 1**

Figure 2 Vicinity Map

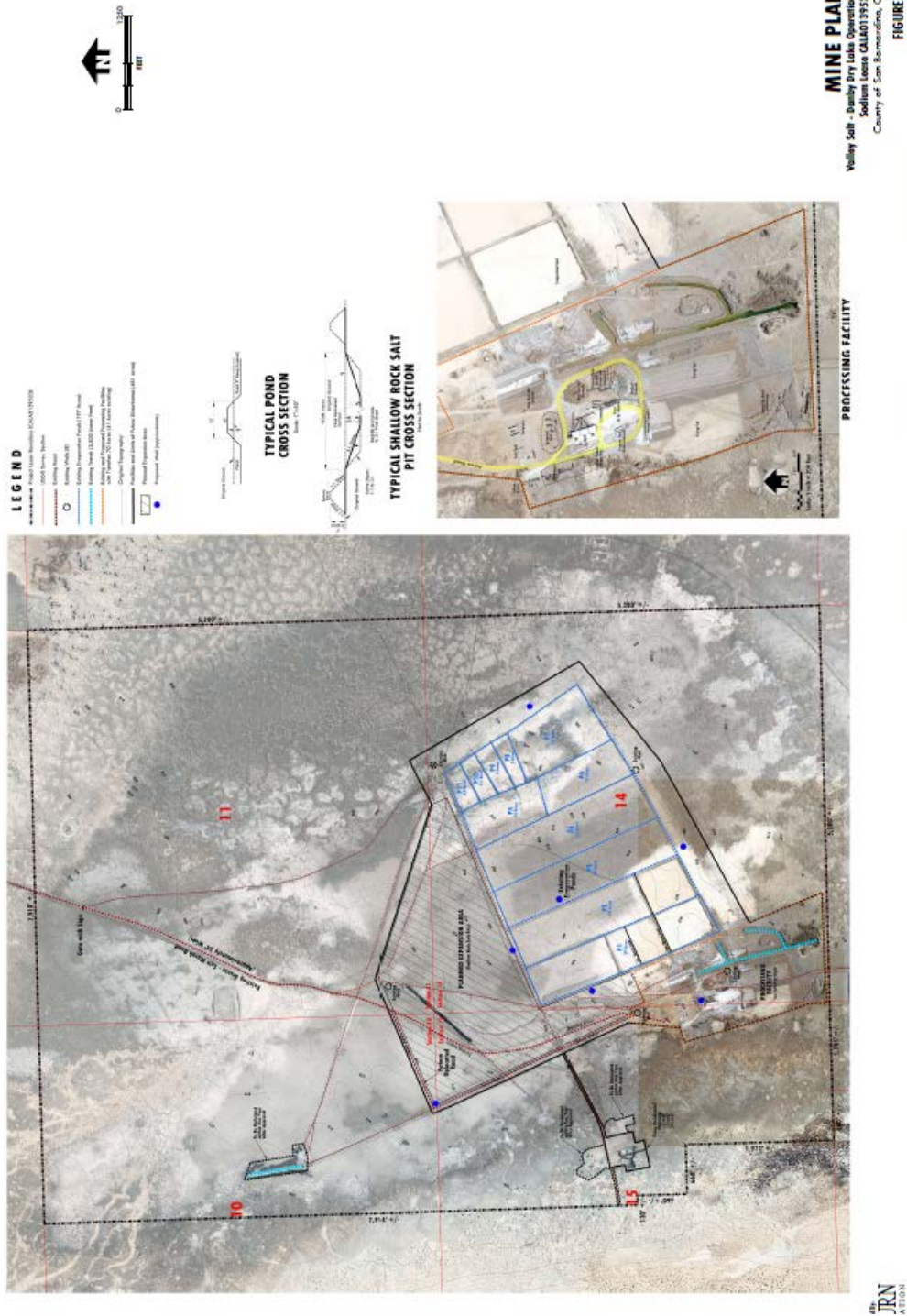


**PROJECT VICINITY and ACCESS ROAD**  
Valley Salt - Danby Dry Lake Operations  
Sodium Lease CAL01 99523  
County of San Bernardino, CA  
**FIGURE 2**





Figure 3 Site Plan



## **EVALUATION FORMAT**

This Initial Study is prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Section 15000, et seq.). Specifically, the preparation of an Initial Study is guided by Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines. This format of the study is presented as follows. The project is evaluated based on its effect on 20 major categories of environmental factors. Each factor is reviewed by responding to a series of questions regarding the impact of the project on each element of the overall factor. The Initial Study checklist provides a formatted analysis that provides a determination of the effect of the project on the factor and its elements. The effect of the project is categorized into one of the following four categories of possible determinations:

Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant	No Impact
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Substantiation is then provided to justify each determination. One of the four following conclusions is then provided as a summary of the analysis for each of the major environmental factors.

1. **No Impact:** No impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.
2. **Less than Significant Impact:** No significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.
3. **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated:** Possible significant adverse impacts have been identified or anticipated and the following mitigation measures are required as a condition of project approval to reduce these impacts to a level below significant. The required mitigation measures are: (List of mitigation measures)
4. **Potentially Significant Impact:** Significant adverse impacts have been identified or anticipated. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required to evaluate these impacts, which are (List of the impacts requiring analysis within the EIR).

At the end of the analysis the required mitigation measures are restated and categorized as being either self- monitoring or as requiring a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:**

The environmental factors checked below will be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- |                                                           |                                                                    |                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Aesthetics</u>                | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Agriculture and Forestry Resources</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Air Quality</u>                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Biological Resources</u>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Cultural Resources</u>                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Energy</u>                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Geology/Soils</u>             | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</u>           | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Hazards &amp; Hazardous Materials</u>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Hydrology/Water Quality</u>   | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Land Use/Planning</u>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Mineral Resources</u>                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Noise</u>                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Population/Housing</u>                 | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Public Services</u>                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Recreation</u>                | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Transportation</u>                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Tribal Cultural Resources</u>          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Utilities/Service Systems</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Wildfire</u>                           | <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Mandatory Findings of Significance</u> |

**DETERMINATION:** Based on this initial evaluation, the following finding is made:

<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION shall be prepared.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there shall not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION shall be prepared.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

*Reuben J. Arceo*

Signature: (Reuben Arceo, Planner)

*David Prusch*

Signature: (David Prusch, Supervising Planner)

April 13, 2021  
Date

April 13, 2021  
Date

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant	No Impact
<b>I. AESTHETICS</b> – Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which will adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check  if project is located within the view-shed of any Scenic Route listed in the Countywide Policy Plan):

**San Bernardino Countywide Policy Plan 2020; San Bernardino Countywide Policy Plan EIR; San Bernardino County Development Code; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**

a) *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

The eastern Mojave Desert region has numerous scenic vistas, including views across desert landscapes, toward mountains and ridgelines, and toward rock formations and outcroppings. There are no designated scenic vistas. The Project Site is surrounded by undeveloped and vacant land on all sides. The MWD Iron Mountain Pumping Station and Colorado River Aqueduct are located about 3.5 miles to the southwest and SR-62, a County Scenic Route and eligible State scenic highway is located 5 miles south.

Salt operations have been conducted on the lakebed for many decades and consist of flat drying ponds and just a few small structures that are unobservable from a distance. In addition, due to the remoteness of the area, most lands being under Federal land management, lack of public access to area, and no substantial changes in development

patterns, views across desert landscapes and toward topographic features will largely be unaffected.

The Project Site is zoned Resource Conservation (RC). Furthermore, the Proposed Project is the implementation of site reclamation which requires removal of all equipment and facilities and the backfilling of trenches and ponds to grade to blend with the surrounding areas. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista and less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated. No mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?*

The Project Site is located approximately five miles north of SR-62, a County designated scenic route and an Eligible State Scenic Highway but is not officially designated.<sup>1</sup> The project site is not visible from SR-62. The nearest Officially Designated State Scenic Highway is State Route 38, located approximately 95 miles west of the Project Site. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

- c) *In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?*

The Project Site is surrounded by vacant and undeveloped land. The mine site is not viewed by significant numbers of viewers or visible from any prominent viewpoints as the site is very remote. No residences or recreational areas are in the area. The operations would not be visible from SR-62. Visible impacts are limited to facilities on the site and the ponds. The eventual reclamation of the site will remove all equipment and facilities and fill the ponds to grade and the pits as feasible to blend with the surrounding areas. Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

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<sup>1</sup> San Bernardino County. San Bernardino Countywide Policy Plan Draft EIR. Figure 5.1-1. Accessed February 1, 2021.

- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which will adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The Proposed Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area as any light sources shall comply with the requirements outlined by County Development Code Section 83.07.040, Glare and Outdoor Lighting – Mountain & Desert Regions. This includes fully shielding lights as required to preclude light pollution or light trespass on adjacent property, other property (directly or reflected), and members of the public on adjacent roads. With adherence to existing regulations, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

**No significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

	Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant	No Impact
<b>II.</b>	<b>AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES</b> - In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
a)	Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b)	Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c)	Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)),	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) | Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?                                                                                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) | Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check  if project is located in the Important Farmlands Overlay):

**Countywide Policy Plan; California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program; San Bernardino County Agricultural Resources GIS Map; Submitted Project Materials**

- a) *Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*

The Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program does not identify the Project Site as "Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance" in its California Important Farmland Finder (April 2019). No prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance occurs at the Project Site or within the immediate vicinity.<sup>2</sup> The Proposed Project would not convert farmland to a non-agricultural use. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- b) *Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*

The Project Site is not under or adjacent to any lands under a Williamson Contract.<sup>34</sup> It has a current zoning of Resource Conservation. The Proposed Project would be consistent with the Countywide Plan and would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses or a Williamson Contract. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

<sup>2</sup> San Bernardino County. San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Figure 5.2-1 "Agricultural Resources." Accessed November 11, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> San Bernardino County. San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Figure 5.2-1 "Agricultural Resources." Accessed November 6, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fcb9bc427d2a4c5a981f97547a0e3688>. Accessed March 24, 2020.

- c) *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))?*

The Project Site is currently zoned Resource Conservation. Implementation of the Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned for Timberland Production. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- d) *Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

The Project Site is located on the barren Danby Dry Lake bed and does not support forest land. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- e) *Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

The Project Site is located on the barren Danby Dry Lake bed. Implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**No impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>III. AIR QUALITY</b> - Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district might be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the Project region is non-attainment under an	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

- |    |                                                                                                                |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) | Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people?) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**SUBSTANTIATION:** *(Discuss conformity with the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management Plan, if applicable):*

**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials**

- a) *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?*

The Project site is within the jurisdiction of the MDAQMD and is located in the Mojave Desert Air Basin (MDAB). The Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) and attainment plans provide programs for obtaining attainment status for key monitored air pollution standards, based on existing and future air pollution emissions resulting from employment and residential growth projections. These plans are developed using input from various agencies' General Plans and other projections for population and employment growth. The MDAP is nonattainment for Federal and State PM<sub>10</sub> and for State ozone. Equipment usage would result in emissions of PM<sub>10</sub> and ozone precursors, including NO<sub>x</sub> and volatile organic compounds (VOC) or reactive organic compounds (ROG).

The MDAQMD has jurisdiction over air quality issues and regulations within the MDAB. To assist local agencies to determine if a project's emissions could pose a significant threat to air quality, the MDAQMD has published its Air Quality Rule Book. The proposed project is located in a remote location and will not increase population or urban development (growth). Operations and equipment will comply with these rules to limit exhaust and dust emissions. The exhaust air and dust emissions from operations and reclamation were evaluated and compared to the MDAQMD standards. Annual criteria emission increases are below the MDAQMD CEQA thresholds.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not significantly increase local air emissions or cause urban or population growth and therefore would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the plan. Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *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?*

The Proposed Project was screened for emission generation by Lilburn Corporation using the latest emission factors from the following sources:

- MDAQMD's "Emissions Inventory Guidance for Mineral Handling and Processing Industries" (April 2000);
- CARB EMFAC2017 Emission Rates;
- SCAQMD "Air Quality Handbook" as updated (2019);
- SCAQMD and the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMOD) Off-Road Mobile Source Emissions Factors;
- EPA's AP-42 Section 13.2.2 unpaved roads (November 2006);
- SCAQMD Particulate Matter Emission Factors (July 2010); and
- CARB Carl Moyer Program Guidelines for In-Use Off-Road Diesel-Fueled Emissions (2017).

The criteria pollutants screened for included: reactive organic gases (ROG), nitrous oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), and particulates (PM10 and PM2.5), both exhaust and fugitive dust. Typical daily and annual operations were screened and emissions estimated for the equipment listed in Table 2.

### **Stationary Emission Sources**

The rock salt is crushed and screened by a portable process or production plant consisting of a series of crushers (2), screens (4), and conveyors and stackers (up to 17 - 20) down to desired sizes based on customer demands. The plant is powered by a series of two 838 bhp generators and two small generators less than 50 bhp each power employee trailers and other miscellaneous needs.

All stationary equipment and the generators will comply with MDAQMD rules and regulations and all necessary permits will be obtained prior to operation. Currently, Valley Salt has obtained permits for the "salt crushing, screening, and drying system" (Permit #B013098) and for two diesel powered generators rated at 838 bhp each (Permit #s B13412 & B13413) and two small diesel generators to power the living quarters (<50 bhp). The crushing/screening/drying system is conditioned under its air quality permit to limit production to not exceed 300,000 tons/year.

### **Mobile Equipment Exhaust Emissions**

Mobile pollutant sources are regulated at the state level by CARB, not through the MDAQMD or local counties. Diesel truck exhaust has been the focus of recent studies. The CARB implements a comprehensive Diesel Reduction Plan to reduce emissions from both new and existing diesel-fueled engines and vehicles. The goal of the plan reduced diesel PM emissions and the associated risk by 75 percent in 2010 and 85 percent or more by 2020.

The operations, the production rates, and hauling plans are listed below for the proposed project conditions:

- Salt Production – up to 300,000 tons/year; rock salt 200,000 tons/year; evaporative salt 100,000 tons/year (depending on demand).

- Hours of Operation – 1 shift; 8- 10 hours/day, up to 250 days/year; equipment hours vary, depending on demand.
- Salt is transported by off-road 40-ton capacity haul trucks directly to the process plant 0.5 miles to southwest of quarry – 250 days/year; up to 20 truck-trips/day.
- Portable plant with one crusher, two to three screens, and 10 - 20 conveyors (typical; plant configuration will vary); permitted through MDAQMD (PTO#B013098)
- Haul trucks and diesel equipment must meet requirements of CARB off-road diesel vehicles regulation and fleet averaging requirements to reduce diesel pollutants.

### **Fugitive Dust**

Fugitive dust is generated by other activities onsite including dozing, grading, loading, hauling, and dumping rock salt, and wind erosion of active mine and operations areas, and stockpiles. Dust equations in EPA AP-42, the MDAQMD Guidance Handbook, and/or the SCAQMD guidelines were utilized to estimate dust emissions which are included in Table 2. Existing dust control measures must be in compliance with MDAQMD Rules 401 (limit visible emissions); 402 (avoid nuisance emissions to people or businesses or property); and 403 (updated October 2020), which requires the owner/operator of a mining facility to implement Best Available Control Measures (BACM) to reduce PM<sub>10</sub> entrained in the ambient air and to meet air quality standards.

The dust control requirements for mining facilities are listed in Rule 403 (C)(8) and are required to be in place and operative with approval and periodic monitoring by MDAQMD and the operator ensuring that the standards are met. Rule 403 requires that the operator obtain and implement a District-approved Dust Control Plan which includes control measures to prevent, mitigate, or reduce fugitive dust. The principal dust control measures are the spreading of salt materials which is a natural dust palliative, and water spraying of roads, operational mine and plant quarry areas, and active overburden stockpiles as needed. Water trucks are available for use on-site and use the brine water from on-site wells and/or recycled water from the salt washing plants.

### **Air Quality Assessment**

Table 2 summarizes the total emissions for the planned operations as compared to CEQA thresholds. As shown in Table 2, the total project emissions would not exceed MDAQMD thresholds, therefore, air quality impacts will be less than significant with implementation of MDAQMD rules and regulations.

### **Compliance with MDAQMD Regulation II and Rules 402 and 403**

Although the Proposed Project does not exceed MDAQMD thresholds, the Applicant is required to comply with all applicable MDAQMD rules and regulations as the MDAB is in non-attainment status for ozone and suspended particulates (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> (state)). The Proposed Project shall comply with Regulation II which requires the Applicant to obtain and maintain a Permit to Operate the proposed crush/screening plant and power generators. To limit dust production, the operator must comply with Rules 402 nuisance and 403 fugitive dust, which require the implementation of BACM for fugitive dust sources.

**Table 2**  
**Danby Lake Salt Operations**  
**Estimated Annual Maximum Air Pollutant Emissions (tons/year)**

	<b>ROG</b>	<b>NO<sub>x</sub></b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>
<b>EMISSIONS SOURCES</b>	<b>Planned Operations (tons/year)</b>	<b>Planned Operations (tons/year)</b>	<b>Planned Operations (tons/year)</b>	<b>Planned Operations (tons/year)</b>	<b>Planned Operations (tons/year)</b>
Mobile Equip. and Off-road Trucks (Exhaust)	1.12	6.73	5.66	0.28	0.26
Portable Generators	0.34	7.36	8.34	0.10	0.09
Off -Site Haul Trucks & employee	0.05	0.98	0.32	0.02	0.02
Processing Plant Fugitive Dust	---	---	---	0.24	0.05
Fugitive Dust (onsite operations)	---	---	---	3.39	0.69
<b>Emission Totals (tons/year)</b>	<b>1.51</b>	<b>15.07</b>	<b>14.32</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>1.11</b>
MDAQMD CEQA Thresholds	25	25	100	15	15
<b>Significant</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>

Source: *Air Quality and GHG Emission Tables and Estimates*, Lilburn Corporation 2021

Exhaust emissions from vehicles and equipment and fugitive dust generated by equipment traveling over exposed surfaces, would increase NO<sub>x</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> levels in the area. Although the Proposed Project would not exceed MDAQMD thresholds during operations, the operator is required to implement the following conditions as required by MDAQMD:

1. All equipment used for mining and construction must be tuned and maintained to the manufacturer's specification to maximize efficient burning of vehicle fuel.
2. The operator shall maintain and effectively utilize and schedule on-site equipment and on-site and off-site haul trucks in order to minimize exhaust emissions from truck idling.
3. The operator shall comply with all existing and future CARB and MDAQMD regulations related to diesel-fueled trucks, which may include among others: (1) meeting more stringent emission standards; (2) retrofitting existing engines with particulate traps; (3) use of low sulfur fuel; and (4) use of alternative fuels or equipment.
4. The salt processing plant shall annually renew permits to operate from the MDAQMD and be in compliance with such permits.

MDAQMD rules for diesel emissions from equipment and trucks are embedded in the compliance for all diesel fueled engines, trucks, and equipment with the statewide CARB Diesel Reduction Plan. These measures will be implemented by CARB in phases with new rules imposed on existing and new diesel-fueled engines.

Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

- c) *Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?*

The Proposed Project is located in a remote area of San Bernardino County with no residences or recreational areas in the vicinity. No sensitive receptors are located within the project vicinity. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- d) *Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors adversely affecting a substantial number of people)?*

The Proposed Project is the mining and processing operations and reclamation of a sodium mine. The generation of objectionable odors is typically not associated with surface mining operations and there are no sensitive receptors within the project vicinity. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES - Would the project:</b>				

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                          |                          |                                     |                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Have substantial adverse effects, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California                                                                                                                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Department of Fish and Wildlife or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                          |                                     |                                     |                                     |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) | Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| d) | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| e) | Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?                                                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) | Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional or state habitat conservation plan?                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check if project is located in the Biological Resources Overlay or contains habitat for any species listed in the California Natural Diversity Database ):

**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Biological Resources Assessment,**

- a) *Have substantial adverse effects, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?*

A Biological Resources Assessment (BRA) and protocol-level desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) surveys was prepared for the Proposed Project by Jericho Systems, Inc. The purpose was to address potential effects of the Project to designated critical habitats and/or any species currently listed or formally proposed for listing as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or species designated as sensitive by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW [formerly California Department of Fish and Game]) and/or the California Native Plant Society (CNPS).

Note that the BRA survey included two optional alternative access routes to the east and south and a planned 80-acre clay borrow pit to the northeast of the ponds that have been eliminated from the current Mine and Reclamation Plan. A number of potential impacts to desert tortoise habitat and migratory birds were evaluated for these areas and the BLM and applicant determined to avoid these areas in the current project



description. In addition, the potential new access roads to the east and south could affect the DRECP Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage ACEC. The current project stays within its BLM salt lease area and is within the DRECP designated "High Potential Mineral Area." (defined as "*These areas have been identified as mineral lands having existing and/or historic mining activity and a reasonable probability of future mineral resource development. These identified areas will be designated as mineral land polygons on DRECP maps, recognized as probable future development areas for planning purposes and allowable use areas.*")

Data regarding biological resources on the Project Site were obtained through literature review and field investigations. Prior to performing the surveys, available databases and documentation relevant to the Project Site were reviewed for documented occurrences of sensitive species in the area. The Project Site including the proposed access road alternatives, is situated within the *Danby Lake, Sablon* and *East of Granite Pass* USGS 7.5-minute Series Quadrangles. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) threatened and endangered species occurrence data overlay and the most recent versions of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) and California Native Plant Society Electronic Inventory (CNPSEI) databases were searched for sensitive species data on the *Danby Lake, Sablon, East of Granite Pass, East of Milligan, Iron Mountains, Granite Pass* and *Arica Mountains* quads.

Danby Playa is an approximately 9-mile-long by 2.5-mile-wide (covering roughly 28 square miles) dry lake or playa that is situated in the Ward Valley between the Old Woman Mountains in the northwest, by the Iron Mountains in the southwest and by the Turtle Mountains in the northeast, in the eastern Mojave Desert. The Valley Salt lease area covers roughly 4.5 square miles on the southeast part of the Playa where it trends roughly north-south. The playa surface of Danby Playa is about 630 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Habitat within the Project site consists primarily of dry lakebed or playa (Danby Playa) surrounded by *Larrea tridentata* Shrubland Alliance (creosote bush scrub) and *Atriplex polycarpa* Shrubland Alliance (allscale scrub) habitats.

Special Status Plants – The site is devoid of vegetation and no sensitive plant species occur on-site.

Special Status Wildlife - The only State- and/or federally-listed wildlife species documented within the quads is the State- and federally-listed threatened desert tortoise. No State- and/or federally-listed threatened or endangered species were observed on-site during the field survey. The Project Site consists of undeveloped open space adjacent to existing mining operations, surrounded by open space. Situated within Danby Playa, the Project Site and existing access road are entirely within unvegetated playa that does not contain habitat suitable for any of the sensitive species known or expected to occur within the general vicinity.

Focused protocol-level desert tortoise surveys were conducted within the entire Project Site, wherever there was potentially suitable desert tortoise habitat present (i.e. creosote bush scrub and/or allscale scrub habitats). No desert tortoise individuals or signs were detected within the survey area during the protocol desert tortoise survey. Therefore, desert tortoise is considered absent from the Project Site.

Per the USFWS desert tortoise Critical Habitat overlay, the Project site is not within any USFWS designated desert tortoise Critical Habitat.

The dry lake beds in the Mojave Desert are known to be potential habitat for several crustaceans. Fairy shrimp (Order Anostraca), tadpole shrimp (Order Notostraca), water fleas (Order Cladocera) and clam shrimp (Order Conchostraca) comprise the four living groups of crustaceans within the Branchiopoda class. Most branchiopods live in fresh or brackish (slightly salty) water and a few are found in marine habitats. Many are found exclusively in temporary ponds, where their eggs survive long periods of drought, and are often one of the dominant organisms inhabiting the flat, internally-drained, and generally low-elevation playas of the arid basins in the deserts of the southwestern United States (Brostoff et al 2010). Several members of these groups of crustaceans are considered sensitive by the resource agencies including eight species documented in the CNDDDB that are State and/or federally-listed as threatened or endangered.

Per the CNDDDB, there are no State- or federally listed sensitive branchiopod species documented within the *Danby Lake, Sablon, East of Granite Pass, East of Milligan, Iron Mountains, Granite Pass* and *Arica Mountains* quads. No focused fairy shrimp surveys were conducted. However, the nearest documented occurrence for a sensitive branchiopod species (vernal pool fairy shrimp [*Branchinecta lynchi*]) is approximately 120 miles west/southwest of the Project area (CNDDDB 2018). No sensitive fairy shrimp or other sensitive branchiopod species have been documented within the regional vicinity of the Project. Therefore, the Project is not likely to impact any sensitive branchiopod species.

In addition, due to the unvegetated project site within the playa, there is no habitat for nesting birds.

#### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or US Fish and Wildlife Service?*

Jericho Systems, Inc. conducted a Jurisdictional Delineation (JD) of the Project Site. The purpose of the JD was to determine the extent of State and federal jurisdictional waters within the Project Site potentially subject to regulation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) under Section 401 of the CWA and Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and CDFW under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code (FGC), respectively. The JD included evaluation for the presence of riverine/riparian/wetland habitat and jurisdictional waters, i.e. Waters of the U.S. (WoUS) as regulated by the USACE and RWQCB, and/or jurisdictional streambed and associated riparian habitat as regulate by the CDFW.

There are no riparian habitats and no other sensitive natural communities located on the Project site. The Project Site is entirely within unvegetated dry lakebed. No amphibian species were observed or otherwise detected within the Project Site and none are expected to occur. Additionally, no sensitive fairy shrimp or other sensitive branchiopod

species, which are known to live in fresh or brackish water and marine habitats, were documented within the regional vicinity of the Project Site. The Proposed Project is not anticipated to have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the CDFW or USFWS. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

- c) *Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?*

Jericho Systems, Inc. conducted a Jurisdictional Delineation (JD) of the Project Site as described above. Danby Dry Lake is an isolated playa feature, which receives runoff from the surrounding mountains and ephemeral drainages. All unevaporated surface flows from these surrounding drainages terminate at Danby Dry Lake, which is completely cut off from and does not overflow into any other potentially jurisdictional features. Danby Dry Lake and its tributaries are intermittent, non-traditional navigable waters (TNW), non-relatively permanent waters (RPW) features that do not have a significant nexus to a TNW. Therefore, Danby Dry Lake and its tributaries would not be subject to the CWA under the jurisdictions of the USACE and RWQCB, respectively. However, these features could be subject to the FGC Section 1602 Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSA) under the jurisdiction of the CDFW.

Any proposed permanent or temporary impacts to jurisdictional features that would result from the Proposed Project, would require an LSA notification and possibly an LSA from the CDFW. “CDFW requires a LSA Agreement when a project activity may substantially adversely affect fish and wildlife resources” (<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA>). Based on the BRA and the lack of vegetation and wildlife within the project area, the project would not substantially adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

To determine if the project is required to comply with Section 1602 LSA, the applicant shall notify CDFW per Mitigation Measure BIO-1 below.

### **Mitigation Measure BIO-1:**

*A notification shall be submitted to the CDFW to determine if regulatory permit will need to be obtained through the CDFW prior to initiating new mining within an area and appropriate protective measures implemented.*

*The following are general protective measures that may be required to be determined by the CDFW if applicable:*

- *Worker environmental awareness program;*
- *Demarcation of jurisdictional areas to prevent unnecessary impact;*
- *Avoiding impacts to undisturbed areas with flagging or temporary fencing;*
- *Implementation of BMPs to prevent erosion and sediment discharge;*
- *Invasive weed control; and*

- *Maintaining areas free of trash, debris, hazardous materials, and spills.*

As such, with adherence to the requirements of the California FGC, less than significant adverse impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **Less than Significant with Mitigation**

- d) *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?*

Habitat linkages provide links between larger undeveloped habitat areas that are separated by development. Wildlife corridors are similar to linkages but provide specific opportunities for animals to disperse or migrate between areas. The site is within the Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage ACEC as defined by the DRECP to provide desert tortoise habitat connectivity between the Chuckwalla and Chemehuevi critical habitat areas. The Proposed Project site is located within the expansive Danby Dry Lake Bed devoid of vegetation that contains no desert tortoise habitat in which tortoises could move through. Therefore, the proposed project will have less than significant impacts and no mitigation is required.

#### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- e) *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?*

The project site is devoid of vegetation and there are no plants that would come under the protection of San Bernardino County Native Plant Protection policy (1989). There are no Joshua trees on-site. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **No Impact**

- f) *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional or state habitat conservation plan?*

The BLM has prepared and recently approved (September 2016) a comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) to the CDCA Plan as part of the DRECP. The existing and surrounding BLM designations for the Project Site per the LUPA are the following:

- Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC);
- Ward Valley Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA); and
- LUPA-MIN-1: High Potential Mineral Area

In the LUPA, allowable uses and conservation and management actions are referred to as Conservation Management Actions (CMAs). The CMAs are organized by land use allocation. For the Project Site, there are specific CMAs for ACECs and ERMA as well as area or LUPA-wide CMAs. LUPA-wide refers to CMAs that apply to activities on all types of land allocations within the LUPA Decision Area. The Proposed Project would be in conformance with the BLM's CDCA Plan and the LUPA which requires operations within mineral leases to meet the performance standards of the 43 CFR 3590 regulations.

The Project Site has no vegetation to protect or salvage and will not impact the tortoise linkage area as there is no tortoise habitat in the project area that could be utilized by tortoises. Therefore, proposed activities would be in compliance with the CDCA Plan and the Proposed Project 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. Less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

**Therefore, potentially significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and mitigation measures are required to reduce impacts to less than significant.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>V. CULTURAL RESOURCES - Would the project:</b>				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Disturb any human remains, including those outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check if the project is located in the Cultural  or Paleontologic  Resources overlays or cite results of cultural resource review):  
**Countywide Policy Plan 2020; Class III Cultural Resources Inventory, CRM Tech, January 2019**

- a,b) *Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5?*

*Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5?*

CRM TECH performed a Class III Cultural Resources Inventory on the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed Valley Salt Danby Dry Lake Operations Project. The APE consists of vacant desert land around the existing salt mining facility and Salt Marsh Road. Note that Sablon Road and a proposed new route are no longer part of the proposed project as well as an 80-acre clay borrow pit to the northeast. The vertical extent of the APE below the ground surface will be limited to approximately 10 feet for rock salt pits.

The results of these research procedures indicate that three historic-period sites were previously identified as lying partially within or adjacent to the APE, as listed below:

- Site 36-010525 (CA-SBR-10525H), State Route 62 (5 miles south)
- Site 36-010646 (CA-SBR-10646H), Sablon siding on the Arizona and California Railway (3.5 miles east)
- Site 36-011583 (CA-SBR-11583H), Cadiz Road (Old Cadiz-Parker Road) (2.5 miles east)

During the field survey, the presence of Sites 36-010525 and 36-011583 were confirmed, but both were determined to be outside the APE in light of the nature of the proposed project activities and the potential for effects at these locations. No features or artifacts associated with Site 36-010646 were found in or near the APE, where it was reported in 2010 as having been destroyed by previous construction activities.

One of the existing dirt roads in the APE, Salt Marsh Road, traces its roots to the pre-1950s era, but the original road was largely abandoned in later years. Historical aerial photographs suggest that the current configuration of the road evidently postdates the beginning of large-scale salt-mining operations in the APE between 2014 and 2016. Today, this simple, nondescript dirt road demonstrates no distinctively historical character and has little potential for historic significance. Therefore, it requires no further study. No other cultural resources were encountered within or adjacent to the APE.

The Cultural Resources Inventory concludes that no “historic properties” have been identified within the APE. However, because of its location on the lakebed of Pliocene Danby Lake and within the Bristol-Danby Trough system, the subsurface sediments appear to be of moderate sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological deposits associated with resource procurement activities by the Native population living on finger ridges nearby. CRM TECH presents the following Mitigation Measure CR-1 to the BLM, the agency that manages the land use on-site:

**Mitigation Measure CR-1:**

- *An archaeological monitoring program shall be implemented during earth-moving operations within the APE, including periodic “spot-checking” upon the commencement of ground disturbance and continuous onsite monitoring if deemed necessary by the project archaeologist in consultation with BLM.*
- *If cultural materials more than 50 years of age are discovered, they need to be field-recorded and evaluated. The monitor shall be prepared to recover artifacts quickly to avoid operational delays but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert equipment to allow for controlled archaeological recovery if a substantial cultural deposit is encountered.*
- *If needed, the archaeological monitoring program shall be designed and implemented in coordination with the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe.*
- *If found, collected artifacts shall be processed, catalogued, analyzed, and prepared for permanent curation in a repository with permanent retrievable storage that would allow for additional research in the future.*
- *If any, archaeological site records shall be prepared to document the cultural remains discovered during monitoring and submitted to the South Central Coastal Information Center for incorporation into the California Historical Resources Inventory.*
- *A report summarizing the methods and results of the monitoring program, including an itemized inventory and a detailed analysis of recovered artifacts, shall be prepared upon completion of any field and laboratory work. The report shall include an interpretation of the cultural activities represented by the artifacts and a discussion of the significance of all archaeological finds.*
- *The submittal of the report to the BLM, along with final curation of the recovered artifacts, will signify completion of the monitoring program and, barring unexpected findings of extraordinary significance, the mitigation of potential project impacts on cultural resources.*

Under these conditions, CRM TECH recommends that the proposed project may proceed in compliance with the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If during excavation any subsurface artifacts are discovered, all work shall stop within 100 feet of the area and the BLM Archaeologist, shall be notified and work shall not proceed in the area until the BLM gives a notice to proceed.

Mitigation Measure CR-1 is required as a condition of project approval to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant:

**Less than Significant with Mitigation**

c) *Disturb any human remains, including those outside of formal cemeteries?*

Operational activities, particularly grading, could potentially disturb human remains interred outside of a formal cemetery. The Project Site is not located on or near a known cemetery. However, to insure adequate and compliant management of any buried remains that may be identified during project development, the following Mitigation Measure is required as a condition of project approval to reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

**Mitigation Measure CR-2:**

*If evidence of human remains is identified, the County Coroner will be contacted immediately and permitted to inspect the remains. The County of San Bernardino and the Project Applicant shall also be informed of the discovery. The Coroner will determine if the bones are historic/archaeological or a modern legal case. The Coroner will immediately contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) in the event that remains are determined to be human and of Native American origin, in accordance with California Public Resources Code Section § 5097.98.*

*All discovered human remains shall be treated with respect and dignity. California state law (California Health & Safety Code § 7050.5) and federal law and regulations ([Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) 16 USC 470 & 43 CFR 7], [Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) 25 USC 3001 & 43 CFR 10] and [Public Lands, Interior 43 CFR 8365.1-7]) require a defined protocol if human remains are discovered in the State of California regardless if the remains are modern or archaeological.*

With implementation of Mitigation Measure CR-2, the Proposed Project would not have a significant impact on human remains.

**Less than Significant with Mitigation**

**Therefore, potentially significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and mitigation measures are required to reduce impacts to less than significant.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>VI. ENERGY – Would the project:</b>				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



***SUBSTANTIATION: Submitted Project Materials***

- a) *Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?*

California is one of the lowest per capita energy users in the United States, ranked 48th in the nation, due to its energy efficiency programs and mild climate (United States Energy Information Administration [EIA] 2018). California consumed 292,039 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity and 2,110,829 million cubic feet of natural gas in 2017 (California Energy Commission [CEC] 2019; EIA 2018). In addition, Californians consume approximately 18.5 billion gallons of motor vehicle fuels per year (Federal Highway Administration 2019). The single largest end-use sector for energy consumption in California is transportation (39.8 percent), followed by industry (23.7 percent), commercial (18.9 percent), and residential (17.7 percent) (EIA 2018).

Most of California's electricity is generated in-state with approximately 30 percent imported from the Northwest and Southwest in 2017. In addition, approximately 30 percent of California's electricity supply comes from renewable energy sources such as wind, solar photovoltaic, geothermal, and biomass (CEC 2018). Adopted on September 10, 2018, SB 100 accelerates the State's Renewables Portfolio Standards Program by requiring electricity providers to increase procurement from eligible renewable energy resources to 33 percent of total retail sales by 2020, 60 percent by 2030, and 100 percent by 2045.

To reduce statewide vehicle emissions, California requires that all motorists use California Reformulated Gasoline, which is sourced almost exclusively from in-state refineries. Gasoline is the most used transportation fuel in California with 15.3 billion gallons sold in 2019 and is used by light-duty cars, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles (California Department of Tax and Fee Administration 2018). Diesel is the second most used fuel in California with 3.14 billion gallons sold in 2019 and is used primarily by heavy duty-trucks, delivery vehicles, buses, trains, ships, boats and barges, farm equipment, and heavy-duty construction and military vehicles (CEC 2020). Both gasoline and diesel are primarily petroleum-based, and their consumption releases greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>. The transportation sector is the single largest source of GHG emissions in California, accounting for 40 percent of all inventoried emissions in 2018 (California Air Resources Board [CARB] 2020).

Energy use would be primarily fuel consumption to operate heavy equipment, generators, and trucks during mining, loading, processing, and trucking operations. The expected energy consumption at maximum production from equipment, generators, and trucks, including truck trips to and from SR-62, will be approximately 250,000 gallons of diesel fuel per year and 4,170 gallons of gas. No electricity or natural gas consumption is used onsite or is proposed.

In comparison, County retail sales of diesel fuel was about 159 million gallons in 2019 with a state-wide total of taxable diesel fuel usage of over 3 billion gallons in 2019 (California Energy Commission 2019 Annual Report (CEC-A15; September 2020). The CEC estimates that retail sales account for about 47.2% of the total diesel sales; 52.8%

is non-retail sales. Therefore total diesel sales in the County are estimated to be around 337 million gallons/year and 6.6 billion gallons/year statewide.

Energy use would be typical of similar-sized long-term construction-type and mining projects in the region. In the interest of cost efficiency, operations are not anticipated to utilize fuel in a manner that is wasteful or unnecessary. In addition, all off-road and on-road equipment and trucks will meet fleet averaging requirements and compliance with MDAQMD rules and CARB's Off-Road Diesel Vehicle regulations. Therefore, project impacts would not result in a potential impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, and less than significant energy impacts would occur.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

b) *Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?*

The BLM has prepared and approved (September 2016) a comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) to the CDCA Plan as part of the DRECP. The DRECP is a landscape-level plan that streamlines renewable energy development by designating specific areas for renewable energy projects while conserving unique and valuable desert ecosystems and providing outdoor recreation opportunities. Locations where renewable energy generation is an allowable use, incentivized, and could be streamlined for approval are defined as Development Focus Areas (DFAs). There are no DFAs within or adjacent to the Proposed Project area.

In addition, the Proposed Project would not require implementation of new or expanded electric power or natural gas facilities as it will not be using electricity, natural gas, or any other energy resources nor utilize substantial fuel volumes. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency. No impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS - Would the project:</b>				

a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

- i. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-

Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map Issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                          |                                     |                                     |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ii. Strong seismic ground shaking?                                                                                                                                                                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?                                                                                                                                                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| iv. Landslides?                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?                                                                                                                                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| c) 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?                                                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?                                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?                                                                                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

***SUBSTANTIATION:*** (Check  if project is located in the Geologic Hazards Overlay District):  
***Countywide Policy Plan 2020; Submitted Project Materials; Fault Activity Map of California, 2010; Class III Cultural Resources Inventory; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease***

- a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:
- i) *Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map Issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on*

*other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42*

*ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?*

The Project Site is located in a remote vacant area of southeastern San Bernardino County in a part of California considered not to be seismically active. According to the Southern California Earthquake Data Center, the nearest fault to the Project Site is the Cleghorn Lake Fault, which is located approximately 40 miles west of the site. The Cleghorn Lake Fault is a right lateral fault about 12 miles in length with a most recent surface rupture in the Quaternary period. The Project Site is not located within an area designated by the Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone Act of 1972.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it is located in an area with relatively low earthquake shaking potential.<sup>6</sup> As such, less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

*iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?*

Liquefaction is a process in which cohesion-less, saturated, fine-grained sand and silt soils lose shear strength due to ground shaking and behave as fluid. Areas overlying groundwater within 30 to 50 feet of the surface are considered susceptible to liquefaction hazards. Ground failure associated with liquefaction can result in severe damage to structures. Within the desert region of San Bernardino County, liquefaction potential is high along the Mojave River (eastern Victorville to Barstow). Also of concern are areas adjacent to faults that form groundwater barriers such as local areas southwest of the Calico Fault near Barstow and the Lenwood and Lockhart Faults near Harper Lake. Areas along the Colorado River also pose a high liquefaction potential.<sup>7</sup> The Project Site is not located near those areas. Moreover, the Project Site is located in an area with relatively low earthquake shaking potential.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

*iv) Landslides?*

Seismically induced landslides and other slope failures are common occurrences during or soon after earthquakes. The project area is a flat dry lakebed with no slopes. No substantial slopes are proposed for mining and the evaporation ponds. In addition, the Reclamation Plan states that the surface will be graded to a safe grade close to the original grade leaving no unsafe slope so that the public and wildlife would not be injured

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<sup>5</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Geology and Soils. Figure 5.6-1 "Alquist-Priolo Fault Zones and County Fault Hazard Zones.

<sup>6</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Geology and Soils. Figure 5.6-2 "Earthquake Shaking Potential."

<sup>7</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Page 5.6-15. [http://countywideplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Ch\\_05-06-GEO.pdf](http://countywideplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Ch_05-06-GEO.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Geology and Soils. Figure 5.6-2 "Earthquake Shaking Potential."

if they were to traverse the area. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

b) *Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?*

The Project Site is located within Danby Dry Lake, a dry lakebed. The lakebed is a relatively flat area with interior drainage and no off-site drainage. No significantly developed watercourses exists within the vicinity. The lake bed acts as one large settling basin. The site is not subject to erosion and naturally collects sediment. The lakebed is dry for most of the year, however, after periods of heavy rainfall, standing water may occur. Control of surface drainage and erosion for the operations area involves the following typical components:

- Limiting surface disturbance to the minimum area required for active operations;
- Diverting run-off from undisturbed areas around the active mining area as necessary;
- Using berms, ditches, sediment basins, and localized control and maintenance measures to intercept and control disturbed area drainage as necessary; and
- Stabilizing disturbed areas through grading or water spraying to form a crust.

Erosion control measures along the access road and around the perimeter of stockpiled material will include construction of temporary diversion and collection of ditches, berms, and other measures individually or in combination as necessary. Drainage following reclamation will be identical to the natural drainage of the lakebed. No drainage facilities will be established or maintained after reclamation. Therefore, less than significant impacts are anticipated or are identified, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

c) *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?*

The area is not conducive to landslides, earth flows, rock falls, or erosion. There will be remaining slopes in the trenches or ponds as these features will be filled to near original elevation. The site is composed of barren sands, clays, and salts with no native vegetation. As such, the proposed reclamation would not result in any unstable conditions at the Project Site. No significant adverse impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

d) *Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?*

Expansive soils (shrink-swell) are fine-grained clay silts subject to swelling and contracting in relation to the amount of moisture present in the soil. Structures built on expansive soils may incur damage due to differential settlement of the soil as expansion and contraction takes place. A high shrink-swell potential indicates a hazard to structures built on or with material having this rating. Danby Dry Lake is covered by a layer of efflorescent salts that overlie a thick sequence of clays inter-bedded with thin, discontinuous layers of sand and salts. In some places the clays contain individual salt crystals or salt beds of unknown, but presumably limited, lateral extent. Upon completion of mining activities, the ponds and trenches will be backfilled, and all equipment and facilities will be removed from the site. After reclamation, no refuse or dangerous material and no public safety hazards will remain on-site. Proposed structures are not allowed to exceed 35 feet, which can minimize any hazards posed by expansive soils. Less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- e) *Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?*

Septic tanks and/or alternative wastewater supply systems are proposed as part of the proposed project. Currently, waste is removed via a professional porta-john service. Future facilities will have a San Bernardino County will be conditioned to obtain and approved and permitted septic tank system located off the lakebed to the west dependent on soil testing to meet County requirements. If a septic system is not feasible, septic tanks and/or porta-john services will be utilized. Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- f) *Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?*

The Project Site is located in an area classified as having low to high paleontological sensitivity.<sup>9</sup> All projects involving ground disturbance in previously undisturbed areas mapped with low-to-high paleontological sensitivity will only require monitoring if construction activity will exceed the depth of the low sensitivity surficial sediments. The underlying sediments may have high paleontological sensitivity, and therefore work in those units might require paleontological monitoring. The following Mitigation Measure is recommended to insure adequate and compliant management of any resources that may be identified within the Project Site during operations:

#### **Mitigation Measure GEO-1:**

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<sup>9</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Appendix F Paleontological Resources Report.

A Qualified Paleontologist meeting the standards of Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) shall initially conduct a desktop assessment of the paleontological sensitivity of the project area, including a review of higher resolution geologic mapping and updated museum records searches. The results of this assessment will be used to develop project-specific mitigation measures, such as the development of a paleontological resources monitoring and mitigation plan (PRMMP) for projects in high sensitivity sediments. This plan will address specifics of monitoring and mitigation to that project area and reclamation plan, and will take into account updated geologic mapping, geotechnical data, updated paleontological records searches, and any changes to the regulatory framework. This PRMMP should usually meet the BLM standards (2009). When determining the depth at which the transition to high sensitivity occurs and monitoring becomes necessary, the Qualified Paleontologist should take into account: a) the most recent local geologic mapping, b) depths at which fossils have been found in the vicinity of the project area, as revealed by the museum records search, and c) geotechnical studies of the project area, if available.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would ensure that less than significant impacts to paleontological resources occur.

**Less than Significant with Mitigation**

**Therefore, potential impacts can be reduced to less than significant level with implementation of the mitigation measure above.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS – Would the project:</b>				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***SUBSTANTIATION:***

***Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Reduction Plan (September 2011)***

- a) *Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?*
- b) *Conflict with any applicable plan, policy or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?*

According to CEQA Guidelines section 15064.4, when making a determination of the significance of greenhouse gas emissions, the “lead agency shall have discretion to determine, in the context of a particular project, whether to (1) use a model or methodology to quantify greenhouse gas emissions resulting from a project, and which model or methodology to use.” Moreover, CEQA Guidelines section 15064.7(c) provides that “a lead agency may consider thresholds of significance previously adopted or recommended by other public agencies or recommended by experts” on the condition that “the decision of the lead agency to adopt such thresholds is supported by substantial evidence.”

In September 2011, San Bernardino County adopted the Emissions Reduction Plan (GHG Plan), which outlines a strategy to use energy more efficiently, harness renewable energy to power buildings, enhance access to sustainable transportation modes, and recycle waste. The 2015 update of the GHG Emissions Development Review Process updates the language the performance standard bringing it up to date with current code, and improves upon the menu of options within the screening tables proportioning point values to more accurately account for expected GHG reductions and revised the descriptions of the energy efficiency related options to better describe the physical improvements that would be made in choosing that option. The GHG Plan has the following specific goals:

- Reduce emissions from activities over which the County has jurisdictional and operational control to 15% below 2007 levels by 2020, consistent with the target reductions of the AB 32 Scoping Plan.
- Provide estimated GHG reductions associated with the County’s existing sustainability efforts and integrate the County’s sustainability efforts into the discrete actions of the Emissions Reduction Plan.
- Provide a list of discrete actions that would reduce GHG emissions.
- Approve a GHG reduction plan that satisfies the requirements of Section 15183.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, so that compliance with the GHG reduction plan can be used in appropriate situations to determine the significance of a project’s effects related to GHG emissions, thus providing streamlined CEQA analysis of future projects that are consistent with the approved GHG reduction plan.

However, specific requirements for mining projects to reduce emissions of GHGs have not been adopted and so the Amended Plan would not conflict with the County’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan.

GHG is inherently a cumulative issue, because no single project would be expected to result in a measurable change in global climate. The cumulative nature of GHG is considered by agencies in adopting significance thresholds and adopted significance thresholds represents levels at which a project is considered cumulatively significant.

The GHG emissions were calculated by Lilburn Corp. and compared to the MDAQMD’s 100,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e screening threshold to determine if potentially significant to anticipated global warming. GHG emissions were estimated using the following models:



CARB - SCAQMD's Off-road Model - Mobile Source Emission Factors (<http://www.aqmd.gov/ceqa/handbook/offroad/offroad.html>); Emission Factors for On-Road Heavy-Heavy Duty Diesel Trucks (CARB EMFAC 2017); and U.S. EPA Office of Transportation and Air Quality. These factors are state-wide factors and are appropriate for the Proposed Project.

Annual planned operational GHG emissions amount to approximately 3,339 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e, based on 300,000 tpy mined and exported off-site. Table 3 shows that GHG emissions associated with operation of the Proposed Project are not anticipated to exceed the quantitative significance CEQA thresholds of either 100,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e (MDAQMD threshold) or 10,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e (SCAQMD threshold for industrial sites). Therefore, the Proposed Project would not generate GHG emissions that may have a cumulative considerable or significant effect on the environment.

**Table 3  
 Greenhouse Gases Annual Emissions (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e)  
 Planned Operations  
 Danby Lake Salt Operations**

Sources	Planned Operations	
	CO <sub>2</sub>	CH <sub>4</sub>
On-site Diesel Equipment, Trucks, & Generators	2,832	3.8
Off-site Trucks & Employee Trips	503	0.1
Total Per Year	3,335	3.9
<b>Total MTCO<sub>2</sub>e</b>	<b>3,339</b>	
<b>MDAQMD GHG Screening Threshold (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	<b>100,000</b>	
<b>Exceeds Threshold?</b>	<b>No</b>	
SCAQMD Industrial GHG Screening Thresholds (MTCO <sub>2</sub> e)	<b>10,000</b>	
SCAQMD Industrial GHG Screening Thresholds (MTCO <sub>2</sub> e)	<b>No</b>	

Source: Valley Salt – Lilburn Corp. 2021  
 CO<sub>2</sub>e factors: CH<sub>4</sub> x 28

Final reclamation activities are a one-time activity and are expected to be conducted on approximately 60 days as compared to operations on 250 days and one time only. Therefore, GHG for reclamation activities would be about 25% of the annual operations emissions and would be less than significant.

The state and local regulatory programs for GHG emissions and climate change are described above. There are no existing GHG plans, policies, or regulations that have been adopted by California Air Resources Board (CARB) or MDAQMD that would apply to project emissions. If CARB does develop performance standards, these performance standards would be implemented and adhered to, and there would be no conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation; therefore, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

**Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS – Would the project:</b>				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) 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 it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- |    |                                                                                                                                      |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| f) | Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| g) | Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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**SUBSTANTIATION:**  
**Submitted Project Materials; EnviroStor Database; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**

- a) *Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?*

The salt products are not hazardous and the transportation routes are designated truck routes and have minimal traffic volumes. Less than significant are expected and no mitigation measures are required.

- b) *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?*

The mining of the rock salt and harvesting of the solar evaporated salt does not produce any hazardous waste with the exception of fuels and oils for mobile equipment and generators for the processing equipment. Scheduled equipment maintenance and minor or emergency repairs and re-fueling within maintenance sheds or with portable maintenance/fuel trucks will be conducted with appropriate safeguards. Any used oil generated at the mine site will be collected and transported for off-site recycling or disposal by approved methods and by properly trained and licensed personnel. The Hazardous Materials Division of the San Bernardino County Fire Department is designated as the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for the County to focus the management of specific environmental programs at the local government level. Valley Salt will prepare a Business Emergency/ Contingency Plan to include operations for the site. The Business Plan includes a hazardous materials inventory and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC) to ensure that on site materials are stored appropriately and contained in the event of uncontrolled release utilizing Best Management Practices (BMPs). Fuel storage specifications apply to all above ground fuel containers. The SPCC will be provided to the BLM prior to project start-up. Therefore, no significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

- c) *Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?*

The Proposed Project involves the use of materials common to the mining industry and includes the transport, storage and use of fuels and lubricants. The operator would

continue to comply with all applicable federal and state safety rules and regulations regarding hazardous materials during reclamation of the site. The site is located in a very remote area and no school facilities or proposed school facilities are located within one-quarter mile radius of the Project Site. Therefore, no impacts or anticipated and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **No Impact**

- d) *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 it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?*

The Project Site was not found on the list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control's EnviroStor data management system.<sup>10</sup> EnviroStor tracks cleanup, permitting, enforcement and investigation efforts at hazardous waste facilities and sites with known or suspected contamination issues. No hazardous materials sites are located within or in the immediate vicinity of the Project Site. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **No Impact**

- e) *For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?*

The Project Site is not within an airport safety review area or Airport Runaway Protection Zone.<sup>11</sup> The private airstrip located nearest to the Project Site is the Iron Mountain Pumping Plant Airport, which is located approximately 3.5 miles southwest of the site. The Project Site, however, is not within the approach/departure flight path of the private airstrip. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **No Impact**

- f) *Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

The salt will be loaded by loaders onto over the road 24-ton haul trucks to be transported to the customers' location. Once the trucks traverse unpaved routes from the plant site via Cadiz Road to paved CA State Route 62 (SR-62), trucks will travel east to US 95, then north to Las Vegas area or south to Phoenix area; or west to SR-177 to I-10 to customers in southern California. SR-62 and US 95 are designated as evacuation routes.<sup>12</sup> Activities associated with the Proposed Project would not impede existing emergency response plans for the Project Site and/or other land uses in the project

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<sup>10</sup>California Department of Toxic Substances Control. EnviroStor. Accessed February 8, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Figure 5.8-2 "Airport Safety Zones."

<sup>12</sup> San Bernardino County Policy Plan. PP-2 Evacuation Routes.  
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f54aff8f279449b8a6591ed4a8b1198c>

vicinity. All vehicles and stationary equipment would be staged off public roads and would not block emergency access routes. Implementation of operational activities would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- g) *Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?*

The Project Site is not located within a High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.<sup>13</sup> Equipment and facilities are properly maintained; fire extinguishers are in or near each piece of equipment and or facility. There are no flammable trees, growth, etc. to cause damage to the property and environment. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY - Would the project:</b>				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i. result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>13</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Figure 5.8-4 "Fire Severity and Growth Areas in the Valley and Mountain Regions."

- |      |                                                                                                                                                                              |                          |                          |                                     |                                     |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ii.  | substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or offsite;                                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| iii. | create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of runoff; or | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| iv.  | impede or redirect flood flows?                                                                                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| d)   | In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e)   | Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?                                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

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**SUBSTANTIATION:**

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**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**

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- a) *Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?*
- e) *Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?*

The Proposed Project is located in Danby Dry Lake, a dry lakebed. Danby Dry Lake is part of a large, northwest-trending structural trough that includes Bristol and Cadiz Dry Lakes. This trough is divided into three separate basins by northwest trending mountain ranges that project into the trough. Danby Dry Lake is the sump of a separate drainage basin, known as Ward Valley, that extends about 50 miles north of the lake, and has a drainage of about 1,000 square miles. The Valley Salt lease area covers roughly 4.5 miles on the southeast part of the dry lake where it trends roughly north-south.

The lakebed is a relatively flat area with interior drainage and no off-site drainage. No significantly developed watercourses exist within the vicinity. The lake bed acts as one large settling basin. The site is not subject to erosion and naturally collects sediment. The lakebed is dry for most of the year, however, after periods of heavy rainfall, standing water may occur. Control of surface drainage and erosion for the area involves the following typical components:

- Limiting surface disturbance to the minimum area required for active operations;
- Diverting run-off from undisturbed areas around the active mining area as necessary;
- Using berms, ditches, sediment basins, and localized control and maintenance measures to intercept and control disturbed area drainage as necessary; and
- Stabilizing disturbed areas through grading or water spraying to form a crust.

Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?*

It is estimated that operations will require approximately 1,000 gallons of water (brine not fresh water) each minute (gpm) during production. Water will be drawn from the existing trenches but mainly from the on-site brine production water wells. This water will also be used to wash the raw rock salt to remove the dirt and leave the sodium. No other substances or chemicals will be introduced into the raw minerals or water. No chemicals are used in the production process. The water used in the production process will be returned into the ponds and trenches where the dirt will settle. That same water will be pumped out of the trench into the solar ponds to be evaporated by the natural sun and wind to grow solar salt. Fresh water is currently trucked in from the Palo Verde Irrigation District as needed for domestic uses and equipment washing (approx. 1,000 gpd). In the future, Valley Salt plans on drilling a water well on a 20-acre parcel it owns about one mile northeast of the lease area just southeast of where the project access road meets with Cadiz Road. This water can be used for dust control, wash water and other non-potable uses. The Proposed Project is not anticipated to substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge. Less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- c) *Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:*
- i) *Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;*

Erosion is the wearing away of the ground surface as a result of the movement of wind or water, and siltation is the process by which water becomes dirty due to fine mineral particles in the water. The Project Site is not subject to erosion and naturally collects sediment. The lakebed is dry for most of the year, however, after periods of heavy rainfall, standing water may occur. Control of surface drainage and erosion for the operations area involves the following typical components:

- Limiting surface disturbance to the minimum area required for active operations;
- Diverting run-off from undisturbed areas around the active mining area as necessary;
- Using berms, ditches, sediment basins, and localized control and maintenance measures to intercept and control disturbed area drainage as necessary; and
- Stabilizing disturbed areas through grading or water spraying to form a crust.

Erosion control measures along the access road and around the perimeter of stockpiled material will include construction of temporary diversion and collection of ditches, berms, and other measures individually or in combination as necessary. Drainage following reclamation will be identical to the natural drainage of the lakebed. Furthermore, no new substances will be introduced into the raw minerals or water which will be drawn from trenches and wells for the proposed operations. No chemicals are used in the production process. The water used in the production process will be turned into the water trenches where the dirt will settle. As a result, less than significant impacts are anticipated or are identified, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- ii) *Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or offsite;*
- iii) *Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of runoff; or*
- iv) *Impede or redirect flood flows?*

The Project Site is not within a 100-Year Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zone, 100-year Department of Water Resources Awareness Zone, or a 500-year FEMA flood zone.<sup>14</sup> Danby Dry Lake is an isolated playa feature, which receives runoff from the surrounding mountains and ephemeral drainages. All unevaporated surface flows from these surrounding drainages terminate at Danby Dry Lake, which is completely cut off from and does not overflow into any other potentially jurisdictional features. The Project Applicant would limit surface disturbance to those areas required for reclamation. All surface and groundwaters drain to the interior of the basin or lake. Drainage following reclamation will be identical to the natural drainage of the lakebed. No drainage facilities will be established or maintained after reclamation. Therefore, less than significant adverse impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- d) *In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?*

Due to the inland distance from the Pacific Ocean and any other significant body of water, tsunamis and seiches are not potential hazards in the vicinity of the Project Site. The Project Site is neither located within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain nor a 500-year floodplain.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

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<sup>14</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hydrology and Water Quality. Figure 5.9-2 "Flood Hazard Zones in the Valley and Mountain Regions."

<sup>15</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hydrology and Water Quality. Figure 5.9-2 "Flood Hazard Zones in the Valley and Mountain Regions."



**No Impact**

**Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING - Would the project:</b>				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***SUBSTANTIATION:***

***Countywide Policy Plan; submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease***

a) *Physically divide an established community?*

Salt deposits on the Danby Playa have been known since the 1880s and have been mined off and on over the last century. Valley Salt obtained the current sodium lease (CALA 0 139523) in 2009. The Project Site is located entirely on public lands under the management of the BLM through the Needles Field Office. Valley Salt has submitted a Mining and Reclamation Plan to the BLM Needles office per 43 CFR Parts 3590 – 3596 Solid Minerals (other than coal) Exploration and Mining Operations. Numerous dirt roads, evaporation ponds, trenches, and other historical workings exist onsite and adjacent to the lease area. Valley Salt conducted exploration in 2009 to determine potential brine production areas and has been conducting limited sodium production activities over the past few years.

The physical division of an established community is typically associated with construction of a linear feature, such as a major highway or railroad tracks, or removal of a means of access, such as a local road or bridge, which would impair mobility in an existing community or between a community and an outlying area. The site is located in a remote isolated desert area with no communities in the region. All disturbance will be within Federal lands leased by Valley Salt. Surrounding land uses consist of vacant Federal public lands administered by the BLM.

Therefore, no impacts to a local community are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

b) *Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?*

The Project Site is in unincorporated San Bernardino County and has been used for salt production for over 120 years. No changes or amendments to land use, land use categories, or zoning are proposed; only the continuation of activities historically occurring on-site. The Countywide Plan Land Use Map shows that the project site is within Land Use Category Resource Land Management (RLM) and within Resource Conservation (RC) zoning. The Proposed Project is consistent with the Countywide Policy Plan with the issuance of a Reclamation Plan.

The BLM has prepared and approved (September 2016) a comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) to the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan as part of the DRECP. The existing and surrounding BLM designations for the Danby Dry Lake sodium lease area per the LUPA are the following:

- Chuckwalla-Chemehuevi Tortoise Linkage Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
- Ward Valley Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA); and
- LUPA-MIN-1: High Potential Mineral Area (defined as “*These areas have been identified as mineral lands having existing and/or historic mining activity and a reasonable probability of future mineral resource development. These identified areas will be designated as mineral land polygons on DRECP maps, recognized as probable future development areas for planning purposes and allowable use areas.*”

Per LUPA-MIN-1 above, the site is a high potential mineral area and has a BLM sodium lease to produce sodium from the BLM. Implementation of sodium extraction in this area is consistent with the DRECP with approval of a Mining and Reclamation Plan per 43 CFR Parts 3590 – 3596.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not cause a significant environmental impact due to conflict with any land use plans or policies. No impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XII. MINERAL RESOURCES - Would the project:</b>				

- |                                                                                                                                       |                          |                          |                          |                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that will be of value to the region and the residents of the state? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

- b) 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?

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**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check  if project is located within the Mineral Resource Zone Overlay):

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**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Mineral Land Classification; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**

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- a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that will be of value to the region and the residents of the state?
- b) 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?

The State's Guidelines for Classification and Designation of Mineral Lands help implement California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) by providing the State Geologist with direction in carrying out mineral resource classification of lands in California that are threatened by uses that will be incompatible with or will preclude quarrying. In addition, these guidelines describe how the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) may elect to designate mineral-bearing areas of statewide or regional significance.

Classification is the process of identifying lands containing significant mineral deposits. The objective of classification and designation processes is to ensure, through appropriate lead agency policies and procedures, that mineral deposits of statewide or of regional significance are available when needed. Classification is completed by the State Geologist in accordance with the SMGB's priority list, into Mineral Resource Zones (MRZ). Classification is based on geologic and economic factors without regard to existing land use and land ownership.

The California Department of Conservation Division of Mines and Geology has not mapped the site. The Project area has been used for salt production for over 120 years. Per LUPA-MIN-1 above, the BLM has defined the site as a high potential mineral area and has a BLM sodium lease to produce sodium from the BLM. The Proposed Project would supply sodium resources to the region. Thus, implementation of the Proposed Project would result in a beneficial effect regarding availability of mineral resource that is of value to the region and the residents of the state. No significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XIII. NOISE</b> - Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the Project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**SUBSTANTIATION:** (Check if the project is located in the Noise Hazard Overlay District  or is subject to severe noise levels according to the Countywide Policy Plan Noise Element ):

**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease**

- a) *Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?*

Noise is produced from the on-site equipment, processing, and trucks; operations are required to conform to applicable noise control regulations as outlined in Section 83.01.080, Noise, of the San Bernardino County Development Code. There are no nearby noise sensitive land uses or development within the vicinity of the Project Site. Therefore, no significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?*

As stated, the Project Site is in a remote undeveloped area consisting of open space with no nearby sensitive receptors. No blasting is planned. Groundborne vibration from typical operations is required to conform to applicable vibration control regulations as outlined in Section 83.01.090, Vibration, of the San Bernardino County Development

Code. Therefore, with adherence to the Development Code, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- c) *For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the Project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?*

The Project Site is not within an airport safety review area or Airport Runaway Protection Zone.<sup>16</sup> It is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip that would expose people at the Project Site to excessive noise levels. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING - Would the project:</b>				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***SUBSTANTIATION:***  
***Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Material; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease***

<sup>16</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Figure 5.8-2 "Airport Safety Zones."

- a) *Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?*

Approximately 5 to up to 20 employees would work on-site up to five days per week. Because of the remote location of the mine site, residences for the miners are required to house the miners when they are working at the mine. The nearest town is one and a half hours away in one direction. the Proposed Project would not induce unplanned population growth by creating a substantial number of new jobs. No significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- b) *Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?*

The proposed uses would not displace substantial numbers of existing housing units, or require the construction of replacement housing, as no housing units are proposed to be demolished for the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XV. PUBLIC SERVICES</b>				
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 any of the public services:				
Fire Protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Police Protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Public Facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>SUBSTANTIATION:</b>				
<b>Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease</b>				

- a) *Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, 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 any of the public services:*

*Fire Protection?*

The Project Site is located within a Federal Responsibility Area.<sup>17</sup> The federal government is responsible for providing fire protection for most nonurban areas in the County. Because the Project Site is located within the California Desert Conservation Area, the BLM has primary responsibility for fire suppression. Fire extinguishers are in or near each piece of equipment and or facility. The Project Site is also not located in a very high fire hazard severity zone. Therefore, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to result in the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities. No impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

*Police Protection?*

The Project Site is located within the East Desert Region of the County. The County Sheriff 's Department serves the East Desert Region from its Morongo Basin Station at 63665 29 Palms Hwy in the Joshua Tree community planning area. Implementation of the Proposed Project would not require additional police facilities or services. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

*Schools?*

The Proposed Project would not create a direct demand for public school services as it does not include any type of residential use or other land use, or an increase in employment that may induce population growth. As such, the development would not generate any new school-aged children requiring public education. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

*Parks?*

The Proposed Project does not include any type of residential use or other land use or increase in employment that may generate a population that would increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities in the vicinity, in which there are none. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

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<sup>17</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR: Public Services. Figure 5.14-2 "Fire Responsibility Areas."

**No Impact**

*Other Public Facilities?*

The Proposed Project would not result in an increased residential population or a significant increase in the work force. Implementation of the Proposed Project would not adversely affect other public facilities or require the construction of new or modified facilities. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XVI. RECREATION</b>				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility will occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***SUBSTANTIATION:***

***Submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan for Danby Dry Lake Sodium Lease***

- a) *Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility will occur or be accelerated?*

No residential use or other land use or substantial change in employment that may generate a population that would increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities in the vicinity is proposed. Accordingly, implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in the increased use or substantial physical deterioration of an existing neighborhood or regional park. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.



**No Impact**

- b) *Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?*

The Proposed Project does not include the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. No recreational facilities would be removed, and the addition of employees would not create the need for additional facilities. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XVII. TRANSPORTATION – Would the project:</b>				
a) Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 subdivision (b)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

***SUBSTANTIATION:***

***Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials***

- a) *Conflict with a program plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?*

The Project Site is located in a remote undeveloped area of southeastern San Bernardino County with minimal traffic, 55 miles east of Twentynine Palms, 50 miles northwest of Blythe, and 53 miles southwest of Needles. There are no planned bicycle

and pedestrian facilities for the area of the Project Site.<sup>18</sup> The Proposed Project is located within the Morongo Basin Transit Authority, however there are no proposed bus routes for the area.<sup>19</sup>

The trucks will travel on SR-62 east to US 95, then north to Las Vegas area or southeast to Phoenix area; or west to SR- 177 to I-10 to customers in southern California. These routes are designated major highways and truck routes.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, due to the remote area and lightly traveled highways in the eastern desert, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

- b) *Would the project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 subdivision (b)?*

Senate Bill 743 (SB 743), approved in 2013, endeavors to change the way transportation impacts will be determined according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In December 2018, the Natural Resources Agency finalized updates to CEQA Guidelines to incorporate SB 743 (i.e., Vehicle Miles Traveled [VMT]).

The Proposed Project is anticipated to produce approximately 50 off-site truck trips/day based on maximum production. Salt products are shipped to various markets on designated truck routes described above. The number of estimated trips based on 100 trip end and 10 hour work days is 10 AM peak hour trips and 10 PM peak hour trips. Pursuant to the County of San Bernardino's Transportation Impact Study Guidelines (July 9, 2019), additional traffic analysis is not necessary as the Project is anticipated to generate fewer than 100 peak hour trips. Additionally, traffic is minimal in this remote area of the eastern desert and the project provides salt products to meet market demand. Therefore, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b), implementation of the Proposed Project would allow the local need for industrial material to be met while producing a minimal number of vehicles miles traveled. Less than significant impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- c) *Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?*

The Proposed Project does not involve any road development or design features that could substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses. As stated, the site is located in a remote undeveloped area with minimal traffic. access to the project site is limited to employees and authorized personnel. Therefore,

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<sup>18</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Transportation and Traffic. Figure 5.16-11 "Future Bicycle Facilities-East Desert Region."

<sup>19</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Transportation and Traffic. Figure 5.16-7 "Future Transit Routes-East Desert Region."

<sup>20</sup> San Bernardino County Policy Plan. TM-5 Goods Movement Network. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=7b6f66759d3844efbfa15d16f738519a>

the Proposed Project would not substantially increase hazards due to a design feature or incompatible uses. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- d) *Result in inadequate emergency access?*

Activities associated with the Proposed Project would not impede existing emergency response plans for the Project Site and/or other land uses in the project vicinity due to its remote location and minimal traffic in area. All vehicles and stationary equipment would be staged off public roads and would not block emergency access routes. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
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**XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- a) Would the Project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

- |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                          |                                     |                          |                          |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| i)  | Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) | A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**SUBSTANTIATION:**

***Class III Cultural Resources Inventory, CRM Tech, January 2019, Tribal Consultation; AB52 Consultation***

- a) *i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or;*
- ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?*

California Assembly Bill 52 (AB52) was approved by Governor Brown on September 25, 2014. AB52 specifies that CEQA projects with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource may have a significant effect on the environment. As such, the bill requires lead agency consultation with California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of a proposed project, if the tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed of proposed projects in that geographic area. The legislation further requires that the tribe-requested consultation be completed prior to determining whether a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration, or environmental impact report is required for a project.

On August 31, 2018, CRM TECH submitted a written request to the State of California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) for a records search in the commission's Sacred Lands File. Following the NAHC's recommendations and previously established consultation protocol, CRM TECH further contacted a total of 13 tribal representatives in the region, both in writing and by telephone, for additional information on potential Native American cultural resources in or near the Area of Potential Effect (APE).

The NAHC reported that the Sacred Lands File identified no Native American cultural resources within the APE but recommended that local Native American groups be contacted for further information. For that purpose, the NAHC provided a list of potential contacts in the region. Upon receiving the NAHC's reply, CRM TECH sent written requests for comments to seven of the nine tribal organizations on the referral list. In consultation with Christopher Dalu, BLM Archaeologist, CRM TECH did not contact the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley or the Kern Valley Indian Community because their areas of primary interest lie far from the project location. For some of the other seven tribes, the designated spokes persons on cultural resources issues were contacted in addition to the tribal political leaders recommended by the NAHC. In all, 13 tribal representatives were consulted, as listed below:

- Matthew Leivas, Director of the Chemehuevi Cultural Center, Chemehuevi Reservation;
- Charles Wood, Chairperson, Chemehuevi Reservation
- Brian Etsitty, Acting Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Colorado River Indian Tribes;
- Dennis Patch, Chairperson, Colorado River Indian Tribes;
- Linda Otero, Director of the AhaMaKav Cultural Society, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe;

- Tim Williams, Chairperson, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe;
- Travis Armstrong, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Morongo Band of Mission Indians;
- Robert Martin, Chairperson, Morongo Band of Mission Indians;
- Lee Clauss, Cultural Resources Director, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians;
- Lynn Valbuena, Chairperson, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians;
- Mark Cochrane, Chairperson, Serrano Nation of Indians;
- Anthony Madrigal, Jr., Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians;
- Darrell Mike, Chairperson, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians.

The written requests for comments were sent to the tribal representatives on September 19, 2018, and follow-up telephone solicitations were carried out on October 5-12, 2018. Five of the tribes have responded to the inquiry either in writing or by telephone. Among them, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians stated that the APE was outside the tribe's ancestral territory and declined further consultation regarding this undertaking. The Chemehuevi Indian Tribe expressed concerns over potential cultural sensitivity of the APE based on the knowledge that the lakebed was once occupied by the Chemehuevi people, but did not identify any specific locations or areas of concerns.

The Twenty-Nine Palms Band found the APE to be culturally sensitive but professed no knowledge of any properties of Native American cultural significance in the vicinity. The Tribe requested to review the *Class III Cultural Resources Inventory* report upon completion in preparation for the government-to-government consultation. The Morongo Band and the Serrano Nation also requested copies of the report for tribal review. The Serrano Nation requested to be notified if any Native American cultural resources were discovered in the APE. The Morongo Band further requested Native American monitoring of all ground-disturbing activities associated with undertaking. According to CEQA guidelines, this outreach does not constitute formal Assembly Bill (AB) 52 consultation.

The County, serving as the Lead Agency, is responsible for conducting government-to-government consultation with local tribes as requested per AB52. The County initiated consultation on January 15, 2020. Tribal letter public notice mailers were sent to the following tribes:

- Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Colorado River Indian Tribes
- San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
- Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians,

- Morongo Band of Mission Indians

In an email dated January 15, 2021, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (SMBMI) confirmed that the Proposed Project is located outside of Serrano ancestral territory. Therefore, SMBMI will not be requesting to receive consulting party status with the lead agency or to participate in the scoping, development, or review of documents created pursuant to legal and regulatory mandates.

On a letter dated February 8, 2021, the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe confirmed that the proposed project site is located within Mojave ancestral land. As the Tribe is requesting for more information about the Proposed Project, consultation is still ongoing. Mitigation Measure TRC-1, as a supplement to Mitigation Measure CR-1, should be implemented to preserve and protect the Mojave ancestral cultural landscape.

Tribes' requests for additional project information, coordination, or consultation with the Lead Agency, and/or Native American monitoring, shall be acknowledged through implementation of appropriate Conditions of Approval, at the County's discretion. On April 2, 2021 Linda Otero Director AhaMakav Cultural Society Fort Mohave Tribe was transmitted the draft Danby Lake initial study before the IS/MND was circulated for the 30 day comment and review with the State Clearinghouse and the Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Report prepared by CRM Tech dated 1/15/2019 for review and comment.

**Mitigation Measure TRC-1:**

*If archaeological resources are encountered during project operations by the archaeological monitoring required by Mitigation Measure CR-1 or by on-site personnel, the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe (AhaMakav Cultural Society) shall be informed of the discovery.*

**Less than Significant with Mitigation**

**Less than significant impacts are anticipated with implementation of the applicable Mitigation Measure.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS - Would the project:</b>				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?				
c) 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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**SUBSTANTIATION:**

**Countywide Policy Plan; Submitted Project Materials; California Energy Commission Energy Report**

- a) *Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?*

The project site is located in a remote area with no utility or energy services and will not require the relocation or construction of new storm water drainage facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- b) *Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?*

It is estimated that operations will use approximately 1,000 gallons of brine water per minute (gpm) during production. Water will be drawn from the existing trenches but mainly from the on-site brine production water wells. This water will also be used to

wash the raw rock salt to remove the dirt and leave the sodium. The water used in the production process will be returned into the trenches where the dirt will settle. That same water will be pumped out of the trench into the solar ponds to be evaporated by the natural sun and wind to grow solar salt. Fresh water is currently trucked in from the Palo Verde Irrigation District as needed for domestic uses and equipment washing (approx. 1,000 gpd). In the future, Valley Salt plans on drilling a water well on a 20-acre parcel it owns about one mile northeast of the lease area just southeast of where the project access road meets with Cadiz Road. This water can be used for dust control, wash water and other non-potable uses. Water supplies would be sufficient to serve the Proposed Project. Therefore, less than significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**Less Than Significant Impact**

- c) *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?*

All human waste is removed via a professional porta-john service and future facilities will have a San Bernardino County approved and permitted septic tank system. The Proposed Project would not require sewer collection or treatment services and therefore no off-site discharge of treated wastewater would occur. Therefore, no impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

- d) *Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?*
- e) *Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?*

The Proposed Project would not result in a significant volume of solid waste generation as the proposed mining and processing activities are not typically associated with the production of refuse. Minimal refuse produced by employees on-site shall be disposed into approved trash bins and removed by the operator or a commercial vendor as necessary. Therefore, no impacts are identified, and no mitigation measures are required.

**No Impact**

**Therefore, less than significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.**

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
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**XX. WILDFIRE:** If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                          |                          |                                     |                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?                                                                                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?                                                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water resources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?                                                                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

**SUBSTANTIATION:**

**County of San Bernardino Countywide Policy Plan 2020; Submitted Project Materials; Reclamation Plan**

- a) *Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?*

Equipment and facilities are properly maintained and have fire extinguishers in or near each piece of equipment and or facility. There are no flammable trees, growth, etc. to cause damage to the property and environment. The salt will be loaded by loaders onto 24-ton haul trucks to be transported to the customers' location. Once the trucks traverse unpaved routes from the plant site via Cadiz Road to paved CA State Route 62 (SR-62), trucks will travel east to US 95; or west to SR-177 to I-10 to customers in southern California. SR-62 and US 95 are designated as evacuation routes.<sup>21</sup> The minor daily truck traffic would not impede existing emergency response plans for the Project Site and/or other land uses in the project vicinity. All vehicles and stationary equipment would be staged off public roads and would not block emergency access routes. Implementation of reclamation activities would not impair implementation of, or physically interfere with, an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Therefore, less than significant adverse impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

<sup>21</sup> San Bernardino County Policy Plan. PP-2 Evacuation Routes.  
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f54aff8f279449b8a6591ed4a8b1198c>

### **Less Than Significant Impact**

- b) *Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?*

The Project Site is not located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.<sup>22</sup> Vegetation is very sparse onsite to barren on the dry lake bed with no risk of exacerbating wildfires. Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

- c) *Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water resources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?*

The Proposed Project will not require the construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary ongoing impacts to the environment. No impacts are identified or are anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

- d) *Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?*

The Project Site is not located in an area likely to become unstable as a result of on- or off-site landslide, or within a 100-year and 500-year floodplain, dam inundation area, or fire hazard severity zone.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, no impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **No Impact**

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<sup>22</sup> San Bernardino Countywide Plan Draft EIR. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Figure 5.8-4 "Fire Severity and Growth Areas in the Valley and Mountain Regions."

<sup>23</sup> County of San Bernardino. Policy Plan web maps: HZ-2, HZ-4, HZ-3, and HZ-5.

<i>Issues</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less than Significant</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
<b>XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:</b>				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, 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, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does the project have environmental effects, which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) <i>Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, 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, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?</i>				

The results of the Initial Study show that there are potentially significant impacts to Biological and Cultural / Paleontological Resources. These impacts will be reduced to less than significant levels after incorporation of mitigation measures and compliance with existing rules and regulations. The Class III Cultural Resources Inventory prepared for the Proposed Project concludes that no “historic properties” have been identified within the APE, but the subsurface sediments within the vertical APE appear to be moderate in sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological remains in buried deposits. In addition, the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe have confirmed that the Proposed Project is located within the Mojave ancestral lands. Therefore, Mitigation Measures CR-1 and

TRC-1 shall be implemented to ensure that the Proposed Project does not eliminate important examples of major periods of California history and prehistory.

Therefore, the Proposed Project will not substantially degrade the quality of the environment and impacts to habitat, wildlife populations, plant and animal communities, rare and endangered species, or important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory; no additional mitigation is warranted.

### **Less than Significant with Mitigation**

- b) *Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?*

Cumulative impacts are defined as two or more individual affects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase other environmental impacts. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the development when added to the impacts of other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable or probable future developments. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor, but collectively significant, developments taking place over a period. The CEQA Guidelines, Section 15130 (a) and (b), states:

- (a) Cumulative impacts shall be discussed when the project’s incremental effect is cumulatively considerable.
- (b) The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided of the effects attributable to the project. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.

The Project Site is in unincorporated San Bernardino County and has been used for salt production for over 120 years. No changes or amendments to land use, land use categories, or zoning are proposed; only the continuation of activities historically occurring on-site. The Proposed Project is consistent with the Countywide Policy Plan with the issuance of a Reclamation Plan. Per LUPA-MIN-1 above, the site is a high potential mineral area and has a BLM sodium lease to produce sodium from the BLM. Implementation of sodium extraction in this area is consistent with the DRECP with approval of a Mining and Reclamation Plan per 43 CFR Parts 3590 – 3596.

As evaluated herein, impacts associated with the Proposed Project would not be considered individually adverse or unfavorable with mitigation. Therefore, with obtainment of a Reclamation Plan and implementation of existing rules and regulations and the mitigation measures included in this document, no cumulative considerable impacts are identified or anticipated.

### **Less than Significant with Mitigation**

- c) *Does the project have environmental effects, which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?*

The project site is located in a remote, vacant, undeveloped area in the eastern Mojave Desert. All potential impacts have been thoroughly evaluated and have been deemed to be neither individually significant nor cumulatively considerable with mitigation in terms of any adverse effects upon the region, the local community, or its inhabitants. The proposed project will be required to meet the conditions of approval, rules and regulations, and mitigation measures for the project to be implemented. It is anticipated that all such conditions of approval, rules and regulations, and mitigation measures will further ensure that no potential for significant adverse impacts will be introduced by ongoing and planned mining and reclamation activities as allowed by the project approval. Less than significant adverse impacts are identified or anticipated, and no mitigation measures are required.

#### **Less Than Significant Impact**

**Therefore, potentially significant impacts are identified or anticipated, and mitigation measures are required to reduce impacts to less than significant.**

## **XXII.MITIGATION MEASURES**

**(Any mitigation measures, which are not 'self-monitoring', shall have a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program prepared and adopted at time of project approval)**

### **V. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**CRM TECH performed a Class III Cultural Resources Inventory on the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the proposed Valley Salt Danby Dry Lake Operations Project. The APE consists of vacant desert land around the existing salt mining facility and Salt Marsh Road. Note that Sablon Road and a proposed new route are no longer part of the proposed project as well as an 80-acre clay borrow pit to the northeast. The vertical extent of the APE below the ground surface will be limited to approximately 10 feet for rock salt pits.**

**The results of these research procedures indicate that three historic-period sites were previously identified as lying partially within or adjacent to the APE, as listed below:**

- **Site 36-010525 (CA-SBR-10525H), State Route 62 (5 miles south)**
- **Site 36-010646 (CA-SBR-10646H), Sablon siding on the Arizona and California Railway (3.5 miles east)**
- **Site 36-011583 (CA-SBR-11583H), Cadiz Road (Old Cadiz-Parker Road) (2.5 miles east)**

During the field survey, the presence of Sites 36-010525 and 36-011583 were confirmed, but both were determined to be outside the APE in light of the nature of the proposed project activities and the potential for effects at these locations. No features or artifacts associated with Site 36-010646 were found in or near the APE, where it was reported in 2010 as having been destroyed by previous construction activities.

One of the existing dirt roads in the APE, Salt Marsh Road, traces its roots to the pre-1950s era, but the original road was largely abandoned in later years. Historical aerial photographs suggest that the current configuration of the road evidently postdates the beginning of large-scale salt-mining operations in the APE between 2014 and 2016. Today, this simple, nondescript dirt road demonstrates no distinctively historical character and has little potential for historic significance. Therefore, it requires no further study. No other cultural resources were encountered within or adjacent to the APE.

The Cultural Resources Inventory concludes that no “historic properties” have been identified within the APE. However, because of its location on the lakebed of Pliocene Danby Lake and within the Bristol-Danby Trough system, the subsurface sediments appear to be of moderate sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological deposits associated with resource procurement activities by the Native population living on finger ridges nearby. CRM TECH presents the following Mitigation Measure CR-1 to the BLM, the agency that manages the land use on-site:

**Mitigation Measure CR-1:**

- An archaeological monitoring program shall be implemented during earth-moving operations within the APE, including periodic “spot-checking” upon the commencement of ground disturbance and continuous onsite monitoring if deemed necessary by the project archaeologist in consultation with BLM.
- If cultural materials more than 50 years of age are discovered, they need to be field-recorded and evaluated. The monitor shall be prepared to recover artifacts quickly to avoid operational delays but must have the power to temporarily halt or divert equipment to allow for controlled archaeological recovery if a substantial cultural deposit is encountered.
- If needed, the archaeological monitoring program shall be designed and implemented in coordination with the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe.
- If found, collected artifacts shall be processed, catalogued, analyzed, and prepared for permanent curation in a repository with permanent retrievable storage that would allow for additional research in the future.
- If any, archaeological site records shall be prepared to document the cultural remains discovered during monitoring and submitted to the South Central Coastal Information Center for incorporation into the California Historical Resources Inventory.
- A report summarizing the methods and results of the monitoring program, including an itemized inventory and a detailed analysis of recovered artifacts, shall be prepared upon completion of any field and laboratory work. The report shall include an interpretation of

the cultural activities represented by the artifacts and a discussion of the significance of all archaeological finds.

- The submittal of the report to the BLM, along with final curation of the recovered artifacts, will signify completion of the monitoring program and, barring unexpected findings of extraordinary significance, the mitigation of potential project impacts on cultural resources.

Under these conditions, CRM TECH recommends that the proposed project may proceed in compliance with the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If during excavation any subsurface artifacts are discovered, all work shall stop within 100 feet of the area and the BLM Archaeologist, shall be notified and work shall not proceed in the area until the BLM gives a notice to proceed.

Mitigation Measure CR-1 is required as a condition of project approval to reduce these impacts to a level of less than significant:

**Disturb any human remains, including those outside of formal cemeteries?**

Operational activities, particularly grading, could potentially disturb human remains interred outside of a formal cemetery. The Project Site is not located on or near a known cemetery. However, to insure adequate and compliant management of any buried remains that may be identified during project development, the following Mitigation Measure is required as a condition of project approval to reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

**Mitigation Measure CR-2:**

If evidence of human remains is identified, the County Coroner will be contacted immediately and permitted to inspect the remains. The County of San Bernardino and the Project Applicant shall also be informed of the discovery. The Coroner will determine if the bones are historic/archaeological or a modern legal case. The Coroner will immediately contact the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) in the event that remains are determined to be human and of Native American origin, in accordance with California Public Resources Code Section § 5097.98.

All discovered human remains shall be treated with respect and dignity. California state law (California Health & Safety Code § 7050.5) and federal law and regulations ([Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) 16 USC 470 & 43 CFR 7], [Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) 25 USC 3001 & 43 CFR 10] and [Public Lands, Interior 43 CFR 8365.1-7]) require a defined protocol if human remains are discovered in the State of California regardless if the remains are modern or archaeological.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure CR-2, the Proposed Project would not have a significant impact on human remains.

## **VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS**

### **Mitigation Measure GEO-1**

A Qualified Paleontologist meeting the standards of Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP) shall initially conduct a desktop assessment of the paleontological sensitivity of the project area, including a review of higher resolution geologic mapping and updated museum records searches. The results of this assessment will be used to develop project-specific mitigation measures, such as the development of a paleontological resources monitoring and mitigation plan (PRMMP) for projects in high sensitivity sediments. This plan will address specifics of monitoring and mitigation to that project area and reclamation plan, and will take into account updated geologic mapping, geotechnical data, updated paleontological records searches, and any changes to the regulatory framework. This PRMMP should usually meet the BLM standards (2009). When determining the depth at which the transition to high sensitivity occurs and monitoring becomes necessary, the Qualified Paleontologist should take into account: a) the most recent local geologic mapping, b) depths at which fossils have been found in the vicinity of the project area, as revealed by the museum records search, and c) geotechnical studies of the project area, if available.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would ensure that less than significant impacts to paleontological resources occur.

## **XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **Mitigation Measure TRC-1:**

If archaeological resources are encountered during project operations by the archaeological monitoring required by Mitigation Measure CR-1 or by on-site personnel, the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe (AhaMakav Cultural Society) shall be informed of the discovery.



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Danby Dry Lake Sodium Mine  
APN: 0646-041-080  
March 2021

## **GENERAL REFERENCES**

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## **PROJECT-SPECIFIC REFERENCES**

- CRM TECH. *Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for Valley Salt Danby Dry Lake Operations Project*. January 15, 2019.
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