

## Section 1.0

# Introduction to the Environmental Analysis

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### **PURPOSE OF THE EIR**

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the environmental effects of the proposed Daggett Solar Power Facility (project). The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that government agencies consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary approval authority.

The County of San Bernardino (County) is the lead agency under CEQA and has determined that an Environmental Impact Report is required for the proposed project (State Clearinghouse No. 2018041007). An EIR is an informational document that provides both government decision-makers and the public with an analysis of the potential environmental consequences of a proposed project in their jurisdiction. This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of CEQA as set forth in Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., and 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et seq. (CEQA Guidelines).

This EIR addresses the project's environmental effects, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161. As referenced in CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a), the primary purpose of an EIR is to inform decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects of a project, and describe reasonable alternatives to a project.

This document analyzes the project's environmental effects to the degree of specificity appropriate to the current proposed actions, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15146. The analysis considers the activities associated with the project to determine the short- and long-term effects associated with their implementation. This EIR also considers the project's direct and indirect impacts, and the cumulative impacts associated with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

Where potentially significant impacts are identified, the EIR specifies mitigation measures that are required to be adopted as conditions of approval or may be incorporated into the project to avoid or minimize the significance of impacts resulting from the project. In addition, this EIR is the primary reference document in the formulation and implementation of the project's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP).

The Final EIR will be considered for certification and approval by the County. A decision to approve the Daggett Solar Power Facility project would be accompanied by specific, written

findings, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091, if potentially significant impacts remain significant and unavoidable, and a specific, written Statement of Overriding Considerations, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15093.

## **EIR SCOPE, ISSUES, AND CONCERNS**

### **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed to initiate the County's CEQA review process for the project, identify and seek public input for the project's potential environmental effects, and identify a date for the project's public scoping meeting. The NOP was distributed on March 26, 2018, and identified a public review period through April 26, 2018, in compliance with the State's mandatory 30-day public review period.

### **SCOPING MEETING**

A scoping meeting was held to discuss the proposed project on April 11, 2018, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Daggett Community Services District located at 35277 Afton Street in Daggett, California. A presentation was provided, including an overview of the project and the CEQA process. Following the presentation, participants were encouraged to provide oral or written comments to aid the County in refining the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIR.

Approximately 40 individuals attended the scoping meeting. In addition, a total of 53 written comment letters were received in response to the NOP and scoping meeting. Comment letters were received from agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Key issues of environmental concern expressed by individuals and/or agencies during the scoping period include:

- Sand storms from ground disturbance
- Impacts to biological resources and natural habitat
- Impacts to historical resources including Route 66, the BNSF railroad line, and portions of the local airport which are considered historical in nature
- Water usage, water supply, groundwater, and drought
- Impacts to Daggett Airport and Fort Irwin's training facility
- Visual Impacts
- Impacts to airport operations

- Impacts to Camp Cady

**Appendix A** includes a copy of the NOP, comment letters received in response to the NOP and scoping meeting, and a scoping meeting summary memorandum. The County has made a good faith effort to address all the identified concerns in this EIR.

## **DRAFT EIR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT**

This Draft EIR, with an accompanying Notice of Completion (NOC), is being circulated to the State Clearinghouse, trustee agencies, responsible agencies, other government agencies, and interested members of the public for a 45-day review period in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Sections 15087 and 15105. The review period will begin the day the document is released for public review and will end 45 calendar days thereafter.

During this period, public agencies and members of the public may submit written comments on the analysis and content of the EIR. In reviewing a Draft EIR, readers should focus on the sufficiency of the document in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts on the environment and on ways in which the significant effects of the proposed project might be avoided or mitigated.

Comment letters should be sent to:

Tom Nieves, Contract Planner  
County of San Bernardino  
Land Use Services Department  
385 North Arrowhead Avenue, First Floor  
San Bernardino, CA 92415  
Phone: (909) 387-5036  
Email: Tom.Nieves@lus.sbcounty.gov

Following the close of the public comment period, a Final EIR will be prepared to respond to all substantive comments related to environmental issues. The Final EIR will be completed and made available prior to any public hearings on the project.

## **REPORT ORGANIZATION**

The EIR is organized as follows:

- **Section ES, Executive Summary.** Summarizes the description and background of the proposed project, addresses the EIR format, discusses project alternatives, and identifies potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed project.

- **Section 1.0, Introduction.** Describes the process and purpose of the EIR and gives an overview of the EIR content.
- **Section 2.0, Project Description.** Describes the project location, setting, objectives, and development components, and lists various agency approvals that are likely required in order for the project to move forward.
- **Section 3.0, Introduction to the Environmental Analysis.** Contains a detailed analysis of existing (baseline) conditions, potential project impacts, and required mitigation measures for the following environmental issue areas:
  - Aesthetics and Visual Resources (Section 3.1)
  - Agriculture and Forestry Resources (Section 3.2)
  - Air Quality (Section 3.3)
  - Biological Resources (Section 3.4)
  - Cultural, Tribal Cultural, and Paleontological Resources (Section 3.5)
  - Geology and Soils (Section 3.6)
  - Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Section 3.7)
  - Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 3.8)
  - Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 3.9)
  - Land Use and Planning (Section 3.10)
  - Noise (Section 3.11)
  - Transportation and Traffic (Section 3.12)
  - Utilities and Service Systems (Section 3.13)
  - Effects Found Not to Be Significant (Section 3.14)
- **Section 4.0, Alternatives to the Proposed Project.** Analyzes alternatives to the proposed project and their potential environmental effects.
- **Section 5.0, Other CEQA Considerations.** Summarizes the project's significant and unavoidable impacts and significant irreversible environmental changes and addresses the issues of growth inducement and energy conservation.
- **Section 6.0, Preparers and References.** Identifies reference resources used during preparation of the EIR, as well as persons and organizations responsible for authoring the technical reports and EIR.
- **Appendices.** Contain the project's technical reports and documentation of the NOP and scoping process.

## **INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE**

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150, this EIR incorporates by reference the following documents (available for review at the San Bernardino County Planning Department, 385 North Arrowhead Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92415; or online at [www.sbcounty.gov](http://www.sbcounty.gov)):

### ***County of San Bernardino General Plan (as amended February 2019)***

The County of San Bernardino General Plan is a long-range policy-planning document that defines the framework by which the county's physical and economic resources are to be managed over time. The goals and policies in the General Plan are intended to guide the County's decision-makers. The following elements are included in the General Plan: Land Use, Circulation and Infrastructure, Housing, Renewable Energy and Conservation, Open Space, Noise, Safety, and Economic Development Element. Information contained in the General Plan is incorporated herein because it is the primary source for County policies, objectives, and countywide planning analysis.

The County Board of Supervisors adopted an amendment to the Renewable Energy Conservation Element on February 28, 2019 prohibiting utility-scale renewable energy development on lands designated as Rural Living or on lands located within the boundary of an existing community plan, unless an application for development of a renewable energy project has been accepted as complete in compliance with California Government Code Section 65943 before the effective date of the resolution. Therefore, the proposed project is not subject to this new policy as the application for development was deemed complete on March 22, 2018.

### ***County of San Bernardino General Plan Final EIR (SCH No. 2005101038, February 2007)***

The General Plan EIR was prepared to assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed General Plan. The EIR summarizes potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the County's General Plan, including growth-inducing and cumulative impacts. Information from the General Plan EIR is incorporated herein because it contains relevant environmental information that pertains to the project.

### ***County of San Bernardino Zoning Ordinances***

The San Bernardino County Development Code implements the goals and policies of the General Plan by regulating land uses within the unincorporated areas of the County. Each piece of property is within a "zone" or "land use district" which describes the rules under which that land may be used. These districts generally cover the range of uses allowable within the land use district. The Code also establishes specific development standards for each district and the

procedures to follow in order to approve a particular use. In 2013, the County of San Bernardino passed an ordinance amending Chapter 84.29, Renewable Energy Generation Facilities, and Chapter 810.01, Definitions, of the San Bernardino County Development Code, relating to the regulation of commercial solar energy generation facilities. The ordinance requires that the County make findings for solar renewable energy projects prior to approving such projects. The findings require that prior to approval of a commercial solar facility, it must be determined that the location of the proposed commercial facility is appropriate in relation to the desirability and future development of communities, neighborhoods, and rural residential uses.

### ***Stipulated Judgment***

A Stipulated Judgment was issued by the Superior Court in January of 1996 (Superior Court, Judgment after Trial for City of Barstow, et al Vs. City of Adelanto, et al Case No. 208568, January 10, 1996) to address water supply shortages in the Mojave Basin Area where the project is located. The Adjudication of the Mojave Basin Area was the legal process that allocated the right to produce water from the natural water supply. As mandated in the Judgment, the Mojave Water Agency was appointed as the Basin Watermaster and tasked with the responsibility of sustainably managing water supplies in the Basin.