

3.11 Land Use/Planning

This section provides information regarding current land use, land use designations, and land use policies within and in the vicinity of the project site. Section 15125(d) of the CEQA Guidelines states that “[t]he EIR shall discuss any inconsistencies between the project and applicable general plans and regional plans.” This section fulfills this requirement for the project. In this context, this section reviews the land use assumptions, designations, and policies of the County General Plan and other applicable federal, state, and local requirements, which govern land use within the project area and evaluates the project’s potential to conflict with policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating significant environmental effects. Where appropriate, mitigation is applied and the resulting level of impact identified.

3.11.1 Existing Conditions

The project site is located on approximately 227 acres of privately-owned land in the unincorporated area of Imperial County, CA (Figure 3-1). The site is approximately one mile north from the City of Brawley’s jurisdictional limit. The project site is south of Baughman Road, west of N Best Avenue, and north of Andre Road. The Union Pacific Railway transects the project site. Table 3.11-1 identifies the individual assessor’s parcel numbers (APN) associated with the project site with their respective acreage, General Plan land use designation, and zoning.

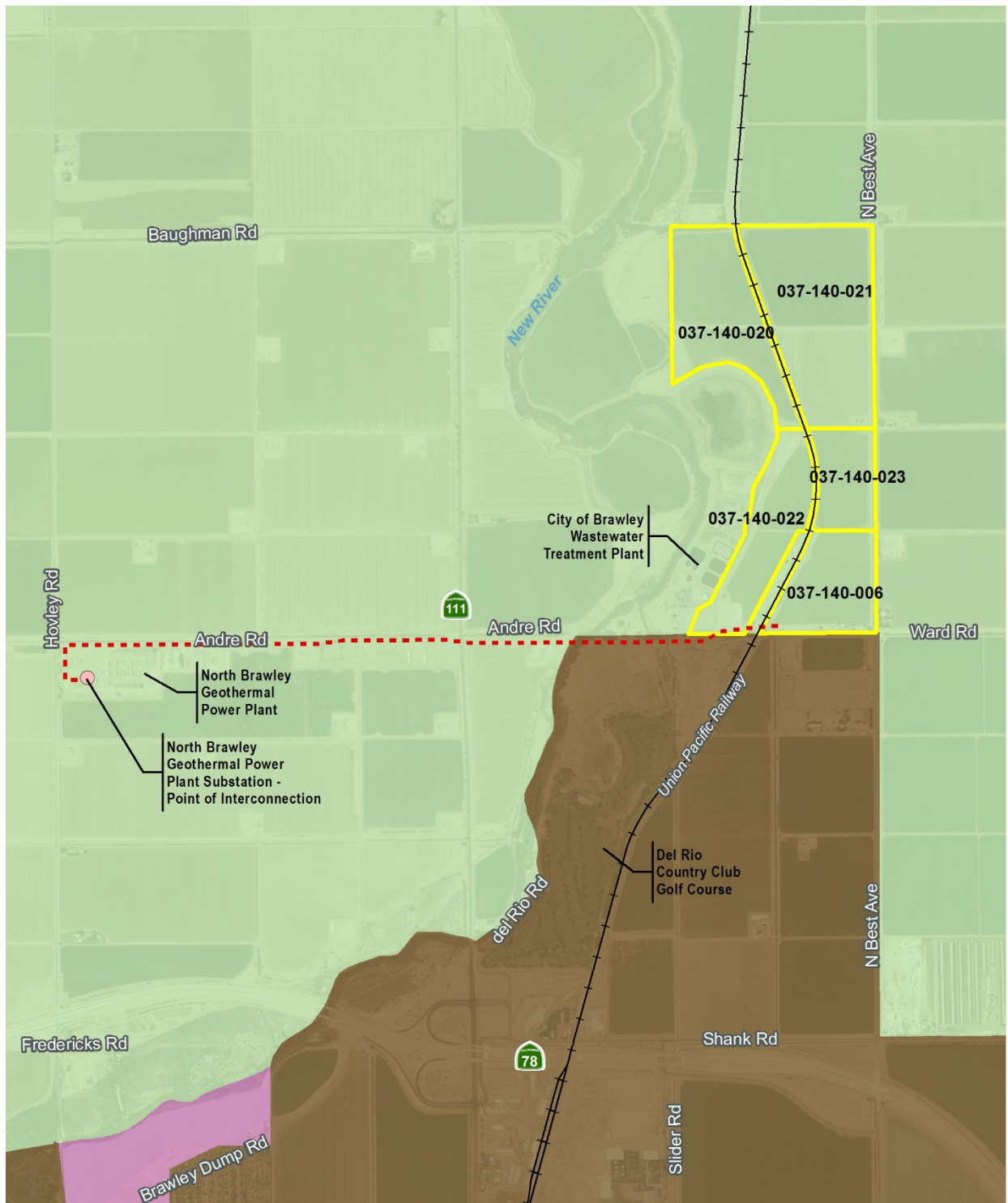
Table 3.11-1. Project Assessor Parcel Numbers, Acreages, and Zoning

APN	Acreage	General Plan Land Use	Zoning
037-140-020	61.73	Agriculture	A-2-G
037-140-021	68.71	Agriculture	A-2-G
037-140-022	38.15	Agriculture	A-2-G
037-140-023	24.71	Agriculture	A-2-G
037-140-006	33.68	Agriculture	A-2-G
Total Gross Acres	227	--	--

APN = assessor parcel number; A-2-G = General Agricultural with Geothermal Overlay

As shown on Figure 3.11-1, the project site’s land use is designated Agriculture under the County’s General Plan. As depicted on Figure 3.11-2, the solar energy facility site is located on a total of five privately-owned legal parcels zoned A-2-G (General Agriculture with Geothermal Overlay). The proposed 1.8-mile gen-tie line would originate from the southern edge of the project site and then head west along Andre Road to interconnect to the IID existing North Brawley Geothermal Power Plant substation, located at Hovley Road and Andre Road.

Figure 3.11-1. General Plan Land Use Designations



Legend

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Project Location | General Plan Land Use
Agriculture |
| Gen-Tie Line | Special |
| Point of Interconnection | Urban |
| Union Pacific Railway | |

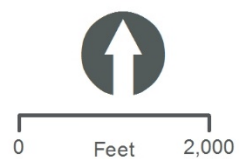
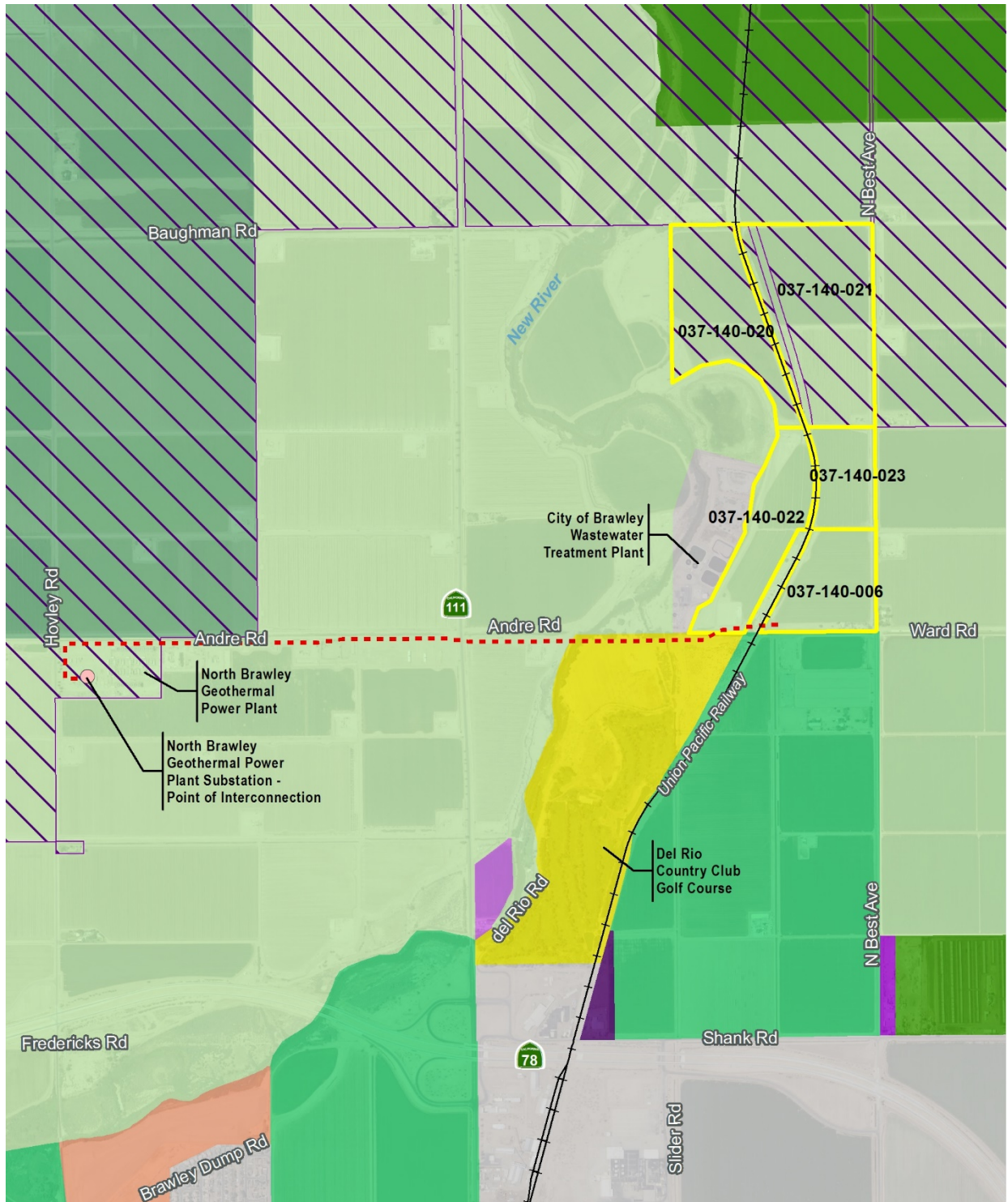


Figure 3.11-2. Zoning Designations



Legend

Project Location

Gen-Tie Line

Point of Interconnection

Zoning Overlay

Geothermal Overlay

Zoning

A-2-G

A-2-G-U

A-2-R-G

A-3-G

Brawley

GS-U

M-1-G

M-2-G-PE

M-2-G-U

S-1-G-U

Union Pacific Railway



0 Feet 2,000

As discussed in Chapter 2, the County adopted the Renewable Energy and Transmission Element, which includes a RE Zone (RE Overlay Map). The RE Overlay Zone is concentrated in areas determined to be the most suitable for the development of renewable energy facilities while minimizing the impact on other established uses. As shown on Figure 3.11-2, the northern portion of the project site (APNs 037-140-020 and 037-140-021) is located within the Geothermal Overlay Zone. However, the entire project site is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

The project applicant is seeking a zone change to include/classify all five project parcels into the Renewable Energy/Geothermal (REG) Overlay Zone (A-2-REG). Further, implementation of the project would require the approval of a CUP by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated battery storage system.

3.11.2 Regulatory Setting

This section identifies and summarizes state and local laws, policies, and regulations that are applicable to the project.

State

State Planning and Zoning Laws

California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. establishes the obligation of cities and counties to adopt and implement general plans. The general plan is a comprehensive, long-term, and general document that describes plans for the physical development of a city or county and of any land outside its boundaries that, in the city's or county's judgment, bears relation to its planning.

The general plan addresses a broad range of topics, including, at a minimum, land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addressing these topics, the general plan identifies the goals, objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals that support the city's or county's vision for the area. The general plan is a long-range document that typically addresses the physical character of an area over a 20-year period or more.

The State Zoning Law (California Government Code Section 65800 et seq.) establishes that zoning ordinances, which are laws that define allowable land uses within a specific zone district, are required to be consistent with the general plan and any applicable specific plans.

3.11.2.1 Regional

Southern California Association of Governments – 2020-2045 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (Connect SoCal)

SCAG is the designated metropolitan planning organization for Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial Counties. CEQA requires that regional agencies like SCAG review projects and plans throughout its jurisdiction. SCAG, as the region's "Clearinghouse," collects information on projects of varying size and scope to provide a central point to monitor regional activity. SCAG has the responsibility of reviewing dozens of projects, plans, and programs every month. Projects and plans that are regionally significant must demonstrate to SCAG their consistency with a range of adopted regional plans and policies.

On September 3, 2020, SCAG adopted the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal). The 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal) includes a strong commitment to reduce emissions from transportation sources to comply with Senate Bill 375, improve public health, and meet the NAAQS as set forth by

the federal CAA. The following goals from the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal) are considered applicable to the proposed project:

- Goal 5: Reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality
- Goal 10: Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats

Local

County of Imperial General Plan

The purpose of the County's General Plan (as amended through 2008) is to direct growth, particularly urban development, to areas where public infrastructure exists or can be provided, where public health and safety hazards are limited, and where impacts on the County's abundant natural, cultural, and economic resources can be avoided. The following 10 elements comprise the County's General Plan: Land Use; Housing; Circulation and Scenic Highways; Noise; Seismic and Public Safety; Conservation and Open Space; Agricultural; Renewable Energy and Transmission Element; Water; and Parks and Recreation. Together, these elements satisfy the seven mandatory general plan elements as established in the California Government Code. Goals, objectives, and implementing policies and actions programs have been established for each of the elements.

Imperial County received funding from the CEC's Renewable Energy and Conservation Planning Grant to amend and update the County's General Plan in order to facilitate future development of renewable energy projects. The Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission Element was last updated in 2006. Since then, there have been numerous renewable projects proposed, approved and constructed within Imperial County as a result of California's move to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, develop alternative fuel sources and implement its Renewable Portfolio Standard. The County has recently prepared an update to the Geothermal/Alternative Energy and Transmission Element of its General Plan, called the Renewable Energy and Transmission Element. This Element is designed to provide guidance and approaches with respect to the future siting of renewable energy projects and electrical transmission lines in the County. The County adopted this element in 2016.

The RE and Transmission Element includes a RE Zone (RE Overlay Map). The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the RE Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of RE projects, with an approved CUP. The RE Overlay Zone is concentrated in areas determined to be the most suitable for the development of RE facilities while minimizing the impact to other established uses. As shown on Figure 3.11-2, the project site is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone.

An analysis of the project's consistency with the General Plan goals and objectives relevant to the project is provided in Table 3.11-2. While this EIR analyzes the project's consistency with the General Plan pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the Imperial County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors retain final authority for the determination of the project's consistency with the General Plan.

Table 3.11-2. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Policies

Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Land Use Element		
<p><i>Public Facilities, Objective 8.7.</i> Ensure the development, improvement, timing, and location of community sewer, water, and drainage facilities will meet the needs of existing communities and new developing areas.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The project includes the necessary supporting infrastructure and would not require new community-based infrastructure. The project would be required to construct supporting drainage consistent with County requirements and mitigation measures prescribed in Section 3.10, Hydrology/Water Quality, of the EIR.</p> <p>Once the project is operational, water would be required for solar panel washing and fire protection. The project would receive water service from the IID. Water would be purchased from the IID and delivered to the project site by water trucks. The proposed project would not require an operations and maintenance building. Therefore, no septic or other wastewater disposal systems would be required for the project.</p>
<p><i>Public Facilities, Objective 8.8.</i> Ensure that the siting of future facilities for the transmission of electricity, gas, and telecommunications is compatible with the environment and County regulation.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects with an approved CUP. The RE Overlay Zone is concentrated in areas determined to be the most suitable for the development of renewable energy facilities while minimizing the impact on other established uses. CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone.</p> <p>The County's General Plan and Land Use Ordinance allows that for renewable energy projects proposed on land classified in a non-RE Overlay zone, that the land on which the project is located may be included/classified in the RE Overlay Zone if the renewable energy project: 1) would be located adjacent to an existing RE Overlay Zone; 2) is not located in a sensitive area; 3) is located in proximity to renewable energy infrastructure; and, 4) and would not result in any significant environmental impacts.</p> <p>As shown on Figure 3.11-2, the northern portion of the project site is located within the Geothermal Overlay Zone. However, the entire project site is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment to include/classify all five project parcels into the RE Overlay Zone. With the approval of the General Plan Amendment, CUP, and zone change to A-2-REG the proposed solar project can be implemented.</p>



Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<i>Public Facilities, Objective 8.9.</i> Require necessary public utility rights-of-way when appropriate.	Consistent	The project would include the dedication of necessary ROW to facilitate the placement of electrical distribution and transmission infrastructure.
<i>Protection of Environmental Resources, Objective 9.6.</i> Incorporate the strategies of the Imperial County AQAP in land use planning decisions and as amended.	Consistent	Because of the minimal grading of the site during construction and limited travel over the site during operations, local vegetation is anticipated to remain largely intact which will assist in dust suppression. Furthermore, dust suppression will be implemented including the use of water and soil binders during construction. Section 3.3, Air Quality, discusses the project's consistency with the AQAP in more detail.
Circulation and Scenic Highways Element		
<i>Safe, Convenient, and Efficient Transportation System, Objective 1.1.</i> Maintain and improve the existing road and highway network, while providing for future expansion and improvement based on travel demand and the development of alternative travel modes.	Consistent	Once construction is completed, the project would be remotely operated, controlled and monitored and with no requirement for daily on-site employees. The project would include limited operational vehicle trips and would not be expected to reduce the current level of service at affected intersections, roadway segments, and highways. The project does not propose any forms for residential or commercial development and therefore would not require new forms of alternative transportation to minimize impacts on existing roadways.
<i>Safe, Convenient, and Efficient Transportation System, Objective 1.2.</i> Require a traffic analysis for any new development which may have a significant impact on County roads.	Consistent	As described in Section 3.13, Transportation, a traffic study was prepared for the project and demonstrated that project operations would have a less than significant impact on the circulation network.
Noise Element		
<i>Noise Environment, Objective 1.3.</i> Control noise levels at the source where feasible.	Consistent	Where construction-related and operational noise would occur in close proximity to noise sensitive land uses (e.g. less than 500 feet), the County would condition the project to maintain conformance with County noise standards.
<i>Project/Land Use Planning, Goal 2:</i> Review Proposed Actions for noise impacts and require design which will provide acceptable indoor and outdoor noise environments.	Consistent	The project would be required to comply with the County's noise standards during both construction and operation.

Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Conservation and Open Space Element		
<p><i>Conservation of Environmental Resources for Future Generations Goal 1:</i> Environmental resources shall be conserved for future generations by minimizing environmental impacts in all land use decisions and educating the public on their value.</p>	Consistent	<p>The project site would be converted from undeveloped land to a solar energy facility. The proposed project is a response to the state's need for renewable energy to meet its Renewable Portfolio Standard, and while it would increase the availability of renewable energy, it would also replace existing sources of non-renewable energy.</p> <p>The power generated by the proposed project would be added to the state's electricity grid with the intent that it would displace fossil fueled power plants and their associated environmental impacts (i.e., air quality and GHG emissions). The proposed project would ensure future generations have access to a broad array of renewable energy sources, providing the public with alternative choices to fossil fuels.</p>
<p><i>Conservation of Biological Resources. Goal 2:</i> The County will integrate programmatic strategies for the conservation of critical habitats to manage their integrity, function, productivity, and long-term viability.</p>	Consistent	<p>A biological resources survey was conducted for the project site. As discussed in Section 3.5, Biological Resources, there are potentially sensitive biological resources located within the project site. However, with the implementation of mitigation identified in Section 3.5, Biological Resources, these impacts would be reduced to a level less than significant.</p>
<p><i>Preservation of Cultural Resources. Objective 3.1:</i> Protect and preserve sites of archaeological, ecological, historical, and scientific value, and/or cultural significance.</p>	Consistent	<p>A cultural resource inventory was prepared for the project site. As discussed in Section 3.6, Cultural Resources, the proposed project has the potential to encounter undocumented archaeological resources and human remains. Mitigation Measures CUL-1 through CUL-7 have been identified to reduce potential impacts to a level less than significant.</p>
<p><i>Conservation of Water Resources. Objective 6.1:</i> Ensure the use and protection of all the rivers, waterways, and groundwater sources in the County for use by future generations.</p>	Consistent	<p>As discussed in Section 3.10, Hydrology/Water Quality, the project will prepare a site-specific drainage plan and water quality management plan to minimize adverse effects to local water resources; as well as coordinate with the IID for water consumption during construction and operation of the project.</p>
<p><i>Protection of Air Quality and Addressing Climate Change. Goal 7:</i> The County shall actively seek to improve the quality of air in the region.</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed project would be required to comply with all applicable ICAPCD rules and requirements during construction and operation to reduce air emissions. Overall, the proposed project would improve air quality and reduce GHG emissions by reducing the amount of emissions that would be generated in association with electricity production from a fossil fuel burning facility. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with this goal.</p>



Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Protection of Air Quality and Addressing Climate Change. Objective 7.1: Ensure that all project and facilities comply with current Federal, State and local requirements for attainment of air quality objectives.	Consistent	The proposed project would comply with current federal and State requirements for attainment for air quality objectives through conformance with all applicable ICAPCD rules and requirements to reduce fugitive dust and emissions. Further, the proposed project would comply with the ICAPCD Air Quality CEQA Handbook's Mandatory Standard Air Quality Measures (Applicant Proposed Measure AQ-1). Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with this objective.
Protection of Air Quality and Addressing Climate Change. Objective 7.2: Develop management strategies to mitigate fugitive dust. Cooperate with all federal and state agencies in the effort to attain air quality objectives.	Consistent	The Applicant would cooperate with all federal and State agencies in the effort to attain air quality objectives through compliance with the ICAPCD Air Quality CEQA Handbook's Mandatory Standard Air Quality Measures (Applicant Proposed Measure AQ-1). Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with this objective.
Protection of Open Space and Recreational Opportunities. Objective 8.2: Focus all new renewable energy development within adopted Renewable Energy Overlay Zones.	Consistent	As shown on Figure 3.11-2, the northern portion of the project site (APNs 037-140-020 and 037-140-021) is located within the Geothermal Overlay Zone. However, the entire project site is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone. The project applicant is requesting a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to include/classify all five project parcels into the RE Overlay Zone. With the approval of the General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and CUP, the proposed solar project can be implemented.
Renewable Energy and Transmission Element		
Objective 1.4: Analyze potential impacts on agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, as appropriate.	Consistent	This EIR has been prepared to meet the requirements of CEQA for purposes of evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, which includes analysis on applicable environmental topics that analyze impacts on agricultural, natural, and cultural resources.
<i>Objective 1.5:</i> Require appropriate mitigation and monitoring for environmental issues associated with developing renewable energy facilities.	Consistent	Please refer to Section 3.3, Agricultural Resources, for a description of existing agricultural resources within the project site and a discussion of potential impacts attributable to the project. A biological resources report has been prepared for the project, which is summarized in Section 3.5, Biological Resources, along with potential impacts attributable to the project. With incorporation of mitigation identified in Sections 3.3, Agricultural Resources and 3.5, Biological Resources, less than significant impacts would result.

Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Objective 1.6: Encourage the efficient use of water resources required in the operation of renewable energy generation facilities.	Consistent	Water use during construction would be used primarily for dust control, and obtained from local IID irrigation canals or laterals in conformance with IID construction water acquisition requirements. The project applicant will also coordinate with IID to purchase water needed for maintenance activities (i.e. PV module washing) to ensure efficient use of water resources.
<i>Objective 1.7:</i> Assure that development of renewable energy facilities and transmission lines comply with Imperial County Air Pollution Control District's regulations and mitigation measures.	Consistent	Because of the minimal grading of the site during construction and limited travel over the site during operations, local vegetation is anticipated to remain largely intact which will assist in dust suppression. Furthermore, dust suppression will be implemented including the use of water and soil binders during construction. Section 3.4, Air Quality, discusses the project's consistency with the ICAPCD in more detail.
<i>Objective 2.1:</i> To the extent practicable, maximize utilization of IID's transmission capacity in existing easements or rights-of-way. Encourage the location of all major transmission lines within designated corridors easements, and rights-of-way.	Consistent	The project involves the construction and operation of new renewable energy infrastructure that would interconnect with existing and approved IID transmission infrastructure thereby maximizing the use of existing facilities.
Seismic and Public Safety Element		
Land Use Planning and Public Safety. Goal 1: Include public health and safety considerations in land use planning.	Consistent	Division 5 of the County Land Use Ordinance has established procedures and standards for development within earthquake fault zones. Per County regulations, construction of buildings intended for human occupancy which are located across the trace of an active fault are prohibited. An exception exists when such buildings located near the fault or within a designated Special Studies Zone are demonstrated through a geotechnical analysis and report not to expose a person to undue hazard created by the construction. Since the project site is located in a seismically active area, the project is required to be designed in accordance with the CBC for near source factors derived from a design basis earthquake based on a peak ground acceleration of 0.48 gravity. It should be noted that, the project would be remotely operated and would not require any habitable structures on site. In considering these factors in conjunction with mitigation requirements outlined in the impact analysis, the risks associated with seismic hazards would be minimized. A preliminary geotechnical report has been prepared for the proposed project. The preliminary geotechnical report has been referenced in this environmental document.
Land Use Planning and Public Safety. Objective 1.1: Ensure that data on geological hazards is incorporated into the land use review process, and future development process.		
Land Use Planning and Public Safety. Objective 1.3: Regulate development adjacent to or near all mineral deposits and geothermal operations.		
Land Use Planning and Public Safety. Objective 1.4: Require, where possessing the authority, that avoidable seismic risks be avoided; and that measures, commensurate with risks, be taken to reduce injury, loss of life, destruction of property, and disruption of service.		
Land Use Planning and Public Safety. Objective 1.7: Require developers to provide information related to geologic and seismic hazards when siting a proposed project.		



Applicable Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Emergency Preparedness. Goal 2: Minimize potential hazards to public health, safety, and welfare and prevent the loss of life and damage to health and property resulting from both natural and human-related phenomena.		Additionally, a design-level geotechnical investigation would be conducted to evaluate the potential for site specific hazards associated with seismic activity.
Emergency Preparedness. Objective 2.2: Reduce risk and damage due to seismic hazards by appropriate regulation.		
Emergency Preparedness. Objective 2.5: Minimize injury, loss of life, and damage to property by implementing all state codes where applicable.		
Emergency Preparedness. Objective 2.8: Prevent and reduce death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from natural hazards including flooding, land subsidence, earthquakes, other geologic phenomena, levee or dam failure, urban and wildland fires and building collapse by appropriate planning and emergency measures.		
Water Element		
Protection of Water Resources from Hazardous Materials. Program: The County of Imperial shall make every reasonable effort to limit or preclude the contamination or degradation of all groundwater and surface water resources in the County.	Consistent	Mitigation measures will require that the applicant of the proposed project prepare a site-specific drainage plan and water quality management plan to minimize adverse effects to local water resources.
Protection of Water Resources from Hazardous Materials. Program: All development proposals brought before the County of Imperial shall be reviewed for potential adverse effects on water quality and quantity, and shall be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures for any significant impacts.	Consistent	See previous response for Water Element above.
Housing Element		
Not Applicable. The proposed project is a solar energy project and does not include the development of housing.		

Source: ICPDS 2008

AQAP = air quality attainment plan; CUP = conditional use permit; EIR = environmental impact report; GV = growth visioning; ICAPCD = Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; IID = Imperial Irrigation District; MW = megawatt; RE = renewable energy; ROW = right-of-way;

County of Imperial Land Use Ordinance

The County’s Land Use Ordinance provides the physical land use planning criteria for development within the jurisdiction of the County. The Land Use Ordinance identifies the permitted and conditional

uses within a zoning designation. Uses identified as conditionally permitted require a CUP, which is subject to the discretionary approval of the County Board of Supervisors per a recommendation by the County Planning Commission.

A-2 Zoning. As depicted on Figure 3.11-2, the solar energy facility site is located on a total of five privately-owned legal parcels zoned A-2-G (General Agriculture with a Geothermal Overlay). Pursuant to Title 9, Division 5, Chapter 8 (County of Imperial 2019a), the following uses are permitted in the A-2 zone subject to approval of a CUP from Imperial County: solar energy electrical generator, battery storage facility, electrical substations, communication towers, and facilities for the transmission of electrical energy.

RE Resources. According to Title 9, Division 17 of the Land Use Ordinance, the purpose of the RE Resources regulations are to “facilitate the beneficial use of renewable energy resources for the general welfare of the people of Imperial County and the State of California; to protect renewable energy resources from wasteful or detrimental uses; and to protect people, property, and the environment from detriments that might result from the improper use of renewable energy resources” (County of Imperial 2017).

Title 9, Division 17, includes the RE Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects, with an approved CUP. Uses that are conditionally permitted require a CUP subject to the discretionary approval of the County Board of Supervisors (Board) per a recommendation by the County Planning Commission.

Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

The Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) provides the criteria and policies used by the Imperial County Airport Land Use Commission to assess compatibility between the principal airports in Imperial County and proposed land use development in the areas surrounding the airports. The ALUCP emphasizes review of local general and specific plans, zoning ordinances, and other land use documents covering broad geographic areas.

The project site is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the Brawley Municipal Airport. However, the project site is outside of the airport compatibility zones of the Brawley Municipal Airport (County of Imperial 1996).

3.11.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents the significance criteria used for considering project impacts related to land use and planning, the methodology employed for the evaluation, an impact evaluation, and mitigation requirements, if necessary.

Thresholds of Significance

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, project impacts related to land use and planning are considered significant if any of the following occur:

- Physically divide an established community
- 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

Impact Analysis

Impact 3.11-1 *Would the project physically divide an established community?*

The project site is located in a sparsely populated portion of Imperial County. The following single-family residences are located in the project vicinity:

- Residences located near the northwest corner of the project site
- Two residences at the corner of N Best Road and Ward Road
- One residence across the proposed project's primary access road
- One residence across the northeast corner of the project site
- One residence (with a horse boarding/training facility) on the west side of N Best Avenue, located south of the project site)

However, there are no established residential communities located in the vicinity of the project site. The nearest established residential community is located approximately 1.7 miles southwest of the project site in the City of Brawley. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not divide an established community and no impact would occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.11-2 *Would the project 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?*

SCAG 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal)

As noted above, the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal) (SCAG 2020) identifies two goals which include reducing GHG emissions to improve air quality (Goal 5), and to promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands (Goal 10).

The 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal), identifies strategies to support the goal of reducing regional GHG and improve air quality. Strategies include leveraging technological innovations including incorporating solar energy, hydrogen fuel cell power storage, and power generation. Once in operation, the proposed project would contribute to SCAG's goal in reducing GHG emissions and improving air quality.

The 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal) also discusses the decline of agricultural land as an issue for the economy. As discussed in Section 3.3, Agricultural Resources, the majority of the project site is designated as Farmland of Statewide Importance, with a pocket of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Local Importance located in the southern portion of the project site. Approximately 1 acre of Unique Farmland occurs along the western boundary of the project site.

The project would temporarily convert Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland to non-agricultural uses. However, as a condition of project approval (CUP condition), the project applicant or its successor in interest will be responsible for implementing a reclamation plan when the project is decommissioned at the end of its lifespan. The reclamation plan includes the removal, recycling, and/or disposal of all solar arrays, inverters, transformers, and other

structures on the project site, as well as restoration of the site to its pre-project condition. Therefore, the proposed project would not permanently convert Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, no impacts due to a conflict with the 2020-2045 RTP/SCS (Connect SoCal) would occur.

County of Imperial General

The County's General Plan applies to the solar energy facility, battery storage system, gentie, and supporting infrastructure associated with the project. An analysis of the project's consistency with the General Plan goals and objectives relevant to the project is provided in Table 3.11-2. As shown in Table 3.11-2, the proposed project would generally be consistent with the goals and objectives of the General Plan.

The County Land Use Ordinance, Division 17, includes the Renewable Energy Overlay Zone, which authorizes the development and operation of renewable energy projects with an approved CUP. The RE Overlay Zone is concentrated in areas determined to be the most suitable for the development of renewable energy facilities while minimizing the impact on other established uses. CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone, and as stated in the Renewable Energy and Transmission Element:

CUP applications proposed for specific renewable energy projects not located in the RE Overlay Zone would not be allowed without an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. An amendment to the overlay zone would only be approved by the County Board of Supervisors if a future renewable energy project met one of the following two conditions:

- 1) Adjacent to the Existing RE Overlay Zone: An amendment may be made to allow for development of a future renewable energy project located adjacent to the existing RE Overlay Zone if the project:
 - Is not located in a sensitive area
 - Would not result in any significant impacts
- 2) "Island Overlay": An amendment may be made to allow for development of a future renewable energy project that is not located adjacent to the existing RE Overlay Zone if the project:
 - Is located adjacent (sharing a common boundary) to an existing transmission source
 - Consists of the expansion of an existing renewable energy operation
 - Would not result in any significant environmental impacts.

As shown on Figure 3.11-2, the northern portion of the project site (APNs 037-140-020 and 037-140-021) is located within the Geothermal Overlay Zone. However, the entire project site is located outside of the RE Overlay Zone. Therefore, the project applicant is seeking a zone change to include/classify all five project parcels into the Renewable Energy/Geothermal (REG) Overlay Zone (A-2-REG) and approval of a CUP by the County to allow for the construction and operation of the proposed solar energy facility with an integrated battery storage system. The project site is not located adjacent to an existing RE Overlay Zone; therefore, the project will need to meet the criteria identified for the "Island Overlay" to obtain approval of an amendment to the RE Overlay Zone. Table 3.11-3 provides an analysis of the project's consistency with the "Island Overlay" criteria.

With approval of the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change, the project applicant will be able to request for approval of a CUP to allow the construction and operation of the proposed solar facility.

Table 3.11-3. Project Consistency with “Island Overlay” Criteria

Criteria	Criteria Met?
Is located adjacent (sharing a common boundary) to an existing transmission source?	There are existing IID power poles along N Best Avenue and Andre Road. As described in Chapter 2, the project includes a gen-tie line that would connect to the IID’s existing North Brawley Geothermal Power Plant substation, located west of the project site’s southern boundary at Hovley Road and Andre Road. The gen-tie route would be approximately 1.8 miles.
Consists of the expansion of an existing renewable energy operation?	As described in Chapter 2, the project includes a gen-tie line that would connect to the IID’s existing North Brawley Geothermal Power Plant substation, located west of the project site’s southern boundary at Hovley Road and Andre Road. The gen-tie route would be approximately 1.8 miles. The proposed project would be capable of generating up to 40 MW of solar energy, thereby expanding renewable energy generation in the area.
Would not result in any significant environmental impacts?	As detailed in Sections 3.2 through 3.15 of this EIR, no unavoidable or unmitigable significant impacts were identified. Where significant impacts have been identified, mitigation measures are proposed, that when implemented, would reduce the impact level to less than significant. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a residual significant impact.

EIR = environmental impact report; MW = megawatt; RE = renewable energy

County of Imperial Land Use Ordinance

Development of the solar energy facility and supporting infrastructure is subject to the County's zoning ordinance. The solar energy facility is located on five privately-owned legal parcels zoned A-2-G. Pursuant to Title 9, Division 5, Chapter 8 the following uses are permitted in the A-2 zone subject to approval of a CUP from Imperial County: solar energy electrical generator, battery storage facility, and facilities for the transmission of electrical energy (County of Imperial 2020). Therefore, with approval of a CUP, the proposed project would not conflict with the County's zoning ordinance.

Imperial County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan

As previously discussed above, the project site is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the Brawley Municipal Airport. According to Figure 3A (Compatibility Map – Brawley Municipal Airport) of the ALUCP, no portion of the project site is located within the Brawley Municipal Airport land use compatibility zones (County of Imperial 1996). Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with the Imperial County ALUCP and no significant impact would occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

3.11.4 Decommissioning/Restoration and Residual Impacts

Decommissioning/Restoration

If at the end of the PPA term, no contract extension is available for a power purchaser, no other buyer of the energy emerges, or there is no further funding of the project, the project will be decommissioned and dismantled. No impacts on land use and planning are anticipated to occur during decommissioning and restoration of the project site. Decommissioning and restoration would not physically divide an established community or conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation. Through the project's decommissioning and subsequent restoration to pre-project conditions, the uses of the project site (agricultural) would remain consistent with the General Plan and zoning designations of the site, which allow agricultural uses. Therefore, no impact is identified and no mitigation is required.

Residual

With mitigation as prescribed in other sections of this EIR, issues related to the conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural use would be mitigated and reduced to a less than significant level. Similarly, with the approval of a CUP and reclamation plan to address post-project decommissioning, the project would generally be consistent with applicable federal, state, regional, and local plans and policies. Based on these circumstances, the project would not result in any residual significant and unmitigable land use impacts.