

3.17 Utilities and Service Systems

This section includes an evaluation of potential impacts for identified Utilities/Service Systems that could result from implementation of the project. Utilities/Service Systems include wastewater treatment facilities, storm drainage facilities, water supply and treatment, and solid waste disposal. The impact analysis provides an evaluation of potential impacts to Utilities/Service Systems based on criteria derived from CEQA Guidelines in conjunction with actions proposed in Chapter 2, Project Description.

The IS/NOP prepared for this EIR determined that impacts with regards to solid waste disposal, storm drainage, and wastewater treatment would be less than significant. Therefore, these impacts are not addressed in detail in this EIR; however, the rationale for eliminating these issues is discussed in Chapter 6.0, Effects Found Not Significant.

3.17.1 Existing Conditions

Water Service

Imperial Valley depends on the Colorado River for its water, which the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) transports, untreated, to delivery gates for agricultural, municipal, industrial (including geothermal and solar energy), environmental (managed marsh), recreational (lakes), and other non-agricultural uses. IID supplies the cities, communities, institutions, and Golden State Water (which includes all or portions of Calipatria, Niland, and some adjacent Imperial County territory) with untreated water that they treat to meet state and federal drinking water guidelines before distribution to their customers.

The project site is located within IID's Imperial Unit and district boundary and as such is eligible to receive water service. IID has adopted an Interim Water Supply Policy (IWSP) for Non-Agricultural Projects, from which water supplies can be contracted to serve new developments within IID's water service area. The IWSP sets aside 25,000 acre-feet per year (AFY) of IID's Colorado River water supply to serve new non-agricultural projects. As of February 2023, a balance of 23,800 acre-feet per year (AFY) remains available under the IWSP for new non-agricultural projects.

Groundwater

The project site is located within the Imperial Valley Groundwater Basin (Basin No: 7-030), which covers approximately 1,870 surface square miles. The physical groundwater basin extends in the southeastern portion of California at the border with Mexico. The basin lies within the southern part of the Colorado Desert Hydrologic Region, south of the Salton Sea. The basin has two major aquifers, separated at depth by a semi-permeable aquitard that averages 60 feet thick and reaches a maximum thickness of 280 feet. The average thickness of the upper aquifer is 200 feet with a maximum thickness of 450 feet. The data regarding faults controlling groundwater movement is uncertain; however, as much as 80 feet of fine-grained, low permeability prehistoric lake deposits have accumulated on the valley floor, which result in locally confined aquifer conditions.

Groundwater recharge within the basin is primarily from irrigation return. Other recharge sources are deep percolation of rainfall and surface runoff, underflow into the basin, and seepage from unlined canals which traverse the valley. Groundwater levels within a majority of the basin have remained stable from 1970 to 1990 because of relatively constant recharge and an extensive network of subsurface drains.

Groundwater quality varies extensively throughout the base; however, is generally unusable for domestic and irrigation purposes without treatment (California Department of Water Resources 2004).

3.17.2 Regulatory Setting

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

State

Senate Bill 610

With the introduction of SB 610, any project under CEQA shall provide a water supply assessment if:

- The project meets the definition of the Water Code Section 10912:

For the purposes of this part, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Project" means any of the following:

1. A proposed residential development of more than 500 dwelling units.
2. A proposed shopping center or business establishment employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 500,000 square feet of floor space.
3. A proposed commercial office building employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 250,000 square feet of floor space.
4. A proposed hotel or motel, or both, having more than 500 rooms.
5. A proposed industrial, manufacturing, or processing plant, or industrial park planned to house more than 1,000 persons, occupying more than 40 acres of land, or having more than 650,000 square feet of floor area.
6. A mixed-use project that includes one or more of the projects specified in this subdivision.
7. A project that would demand an amount of water equivalent to, or greater than, the amount of water required by a 500-dwelling unit project.

(b) If a public water system has fewer than 5,000 service connections, then "project" means any proposed residential, business, commercial, hotel or motel, or industrial development that would account for an increase of 10 percent or more in the number of the public water system's existing service connections, or a mixed-use project that would demand an amount of water equivalent to, or greater than, the amount of water required by residential development that would represent an increase of 10 percent or more in the number of the public water system's existing service connections.

California Water Code

Water Code Sections 10656 and 10657 restrict state funding for agencies that fail to submit their urban water management plan to the Department of Water Resources. In addition, Water Code Section 10910 describes the WSA that must be undertaken for projects referred under PRC Section 21151.9, including an analysis of groundwater supplies. Water agencies are given 90 days from the start of consultation in which to provide a WSA to the CEQA lead agency. Water Code Section 10910 also specifies the circumstances under which a project for which a WSA was once prepared would be

required to obtain another assessment. Water Code Section 10631 directs that contents of the urban water management plans include further information on future water supply projects and programs and groundwater supplies.

Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin

The Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin (or Basin Plan) prepared by the Colorado River RWQCB (Region 7) identifies beneficial uses of surface waters within the Colorado River Basin region, establishes quantitative and qualitative water quality objectives for protection of beneficial uses, and establishes policies to guide the implementation of these water quality objectives.

Local

Imperial Irrigation District Interim Water Supply Policy (IWSP) for Non-Agricultural Projects

The IWSP was adopted by the IID Board on September 29, 2009. The IWSP provides a mechanism to address water supply requests for projects being developed within the IID service area, while the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan was pending approval. The IWSP designates up to 25,000 AFY of IID's annual Colorado River water supply for new non-agricultural projects, provides a mechanism and process to develop a water supply agreement for any appropriately permitted project, and establishes a framework and set of fees to ensure water used to meet new demands do not adversely affect existing users by funding water conservation or augmentation projects, as needed.

Depending on the nature, complexity, and water demands of the project, new projects may be charged a one-time reservation fee and an annual water supply development fee for the contracted water volume used solely to assist in funding new water supply projects. All new industrial use projects are subject to the fee, while new municipal and mixed-use projects shall be subject to the fee if the project water demands exceed certain district-wide average per capita use standards. The applicability of the fee to mixed-use projects will be determined by IID on a case-by-case basis, depending on the proportion of types of land uses and water demand proposed for a project.

Temporary Land Conversion Following Policy (TLCFP)

The Imperial Irrigation District Temporary Land Conversion Following Policy was adopted by the IID Board of Directors on May 8, 2012. This policy developed a framework for a temporary, long-term following program to work in concert with the IWSP, and in line with the coordinated land use/water supply strategy.

The TLCFP works to coordinate land use/ water supply policy that would assign water supplies to categories of use consistent with land use zoning designations and adapt to land use changes as non-agriculture projects are sited in agricultural zones through the County CUP system (i.e., Renewable Energy Overlay). Renewable energy projects may need a short-term water supply for construction and decommissioning activities and longer-term water service for facility operation and maintenance or for water treatment to meet potable water standards. This following program satisfies multiple district objectives and serves to reduce the conservation and water use demands on other IID water users and thus provides district-wide benefits.

3.17.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Thresholds of Significance

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, project impacts related to utilities and service systems are considered significant if any of the following occur:

Water Supply

- Have insufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years

Impact Analysis

Impact 3.17-1 Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

The proposed project would obtain water for construction and decommissioning activities, including grading, and dust control from the applicant's existing contract with IID. For the first two-to-four months of development, 5,000 gallons per day (gpd) of water will be required and approximately 2,000 gpd (0.006 acre feet) for the remaining 12-18 months of construction. In total, 1.1 million gallons of water (10.1 acre-feet) will be used for on-site construction. Water necessary for well drilling would be obtained from local irrigation canals in conformance with IID requirements. Approximately 50,000 gpd (1.53 acre-feet) would be required for drilling activities. In addition to obtaining water from canals, temporary pipelines could be used for water delivery to well sites. All temporary pipelines would be above ground immediately adjacent to access roads.

Once the project is operational, the water demand would decline significantly to approximately 325 gpd (0.36 acre-feet per year). The OEC's are air cooled and would require minimal water to operate. Additional water would be stored on-site for fire prevention measures including an automatic fire suppression system as a safety measure for the two double-walled 20,000-gallon isopentane storage tanks as per the California Fire Code as adopted by the Imperial County Code. Also, some water would be required for washing of solar panels. The project will not require additional water from the IID for operations and will be covered under the existing contract.

As of February 2023, a balance of 23,800 AFY remains available under the IWSP for new non-agricultural projects. The project's estimated water demand would not affect IID's ability to provide water to other users in IID's water service area. Therefore, the project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, and impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

3.17.4 Decommissioning/Restoration and Residual Impacts

Decommissioning/Restoration

At the end of the project's useful life, all equipment and facilities will be properly abandoned and dismantled. All abandonment and decommissioning activities would be short-term and utilities from



decommissioning equipment (e.g., cranes; excavators) would be similar to the construction impacts discussed above and would not be significant. The proposed project would have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, and impacts would be less than significant.

Residual

The proposed project would not result in significant impacts to the water supply of Imperial County; therefore, no mitigation is required. The proposed project would not result in residual impacts.

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