

C.13 Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems

This section analyzes whether the Revised Project and PG&E Upgrades would result in any new significant impacts to public services, utilities, and service systems that were not previously identified and disclosed in the 2010 Final EIR, or whether there would be a substantial increase in the severity of any previously identified impacts to public services, utilities, and service systems. As part of this analysis, the section considers changes public services, utilities, and service systems in the project area and changes in demand for public services that would result from the implementation of the Revised Project and PG&E Upgrades.

Data sources that were used for this analysis include law enforcement data from the Bureau of Land Management and the Fresno County Sheriff's Office (BLM, 2014; Fresno County Sheriff's Office, 2014), fire protection data from the Fresno County Fire Protection District (Fresno County FPD, 2014), and school data from the Fresno County Office of Education (FCOE, 2006).

C.13.1 Environmental Setting

This section describes changes to the environmental setting that have occurred since 2010. Section C.13.1.1 describes any changes to the environmental setting that was presented in the 2010 Final EIR. Section C.13.1.2 describes the environmental setting for the area surrounding the PG&E transmission system upgrades.

C.13.1.1 Revised Solar Project

The environmental setting for public services, utilities, and service systems for the Revised Project site has remained substantially unchanged since approval of the 2010 Final EIR. Panoche Valley remains generally undeveloped and pastoral in character. No new development has occurred, and no major new structures have been built in the valley. Grazing remains the primary land use in the area. The existing police protection, fire protection, schools, and hospitals remain as described in the Final EIR.

In the 2010 Final EIR, the San Benito County Fire Department was described as having fire protection responsibility for the Panoche Valley. Hollister Fire Department is now the fire service provider for the area.

C.13.1.2 PG&E Upgrades

The PG&E Upgrades associated with the Revised Project include installation of approximately 17 miles of optical ground wire (OPGW) and All-Dielectric Self-Supporting cable (ADSS) primarily on existing transmission towers between the Panoche Valley Solar Project site and the existing Panoche Substation in Fresno County. The telecommunications system upgrades also include construction of ~~up to three~~ 2 new microwave communication towers and upgrades to ~~an~~ 2 existing microwave towers. The PG&E transmission system upgrades would include ~~eight~~ up to 12 new transmission structures that are required to tie the existing Moss Landing–Panoche 230 kV transmission line into the proposed PG&E switching station yard, located within the Revised Project site boundaries. The new transmission structures would be installed by PG&E after site preparation is completed by the Applicant. It is anticipated that these upgrades would be constructed by existing PG&E staff over the course of 12 to 16 weeks.

The environmental setting for these upgrades includes the area surrounding the Moss Landing–Panoche 230 kV transmission line between the Project site and the Panoche Substation, the Call Mountains (west

of the Panoche Valley), Panoche Mountain (east of the Panoche Valley), and the area surrounding the Helm Substation (approximately 13 miles southwest of the City of Fresno).

The upgraded portion of the Moss Landing–Panoche transmission line runs east to west, with approximately 10 miles located in Fresno County and 7 miles located in San Benito County. The public services, utilities, and service systems for San Benito County remain as described in the 2010 Final EIR. For the portion within Fresno County, law enforcement would be provided by the Fresno County Sheriff's office, which is divided into smaller Patrol Areas. The PG&E ROW is located within Patrol Area 1. The Area 1 substation is located in the City of San Joaquin and is staffed by approximately 40 officers. About 8 miles of the upgraded transmission line (in both Fresno and San Benito Counties) are on federal lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM's Hollister Field Office has a staff of Law Enforcement Rangers who provide for the safety of BLM employees and public land users. For portions of the transmission line upgrades, response times from law enforcement entities may exceed one hour. Fire protection for the Fresno County portion of the upgraded transmission line would be provided by the Fresno County Fire Protection District (FCFPD). For wildland fires, the FCFPD would coordinate with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The Fresno County portion of the upgraded transmission line is located in the Mendota Unified School District, which has six schools that serve Kindergarten through 12th grade students. Fresno County has several medical centers including acute care hospitals. The Community Regional Medical Center is located in the City of Fresno and has 626 beds and basic emergency and trauma services. Additionally the Kaiser Fresno Hospital, located in the City of Fresno, offers 169 beds and basic emergency services. (BLM, 2014; FCOE, 2014; Fresno County FPD, 2014; Fresno County Sheriff's Office, 2014)

A new microwave communication tower would be constructed within the fence line of the proposed Panoche Valley Solar Project Substation. For this new tower, public services, utilities, and service systems would be the same as described in the 2010 Final EIR.

The Call Mountain site is in an area of uninhabited mixed forest and shrubland open space located west of the Panoche Valley. At this location, a microwave dish would be added to an existing microwave communication tower. The public services, utilities, and service systems would be the same as described in the 2010 Final EIR.

Panoche Mountain, northeast of the Project site, consists of uninhabited grassland and shrubland open space. At this location, a microwave dish, and associated equipment, would be added to an existing microwave communication tower. ~~Panoche Mountain currently has two existing microwave communication towers, and a new 300-foot tall tower is proposed.~~ The site is located at the summit of Panoche Mountain in Fresno County. With the exception of the school district, public services, utilities, and service systems would be the same as described above for the Fresno County portion of the upgraded transmission line. The Panoche Mountain site is located in the Dos Palos Oro Loma Joint Unified School District.

PG&E's Helm Substation is surrounded by agricultural lands, 13 miles southwest of the City of Fresno. There is currently no microwave communication tower at the substation. A new tower would be constructed within the fence line of the substation, and would be approximately 100 feet tall. With the exception of the school district, public services, utilities, and service systems would be the same as described above for the Fresno County portion of the upgraded transmission line. Helm Substation is located in the Caruthers Unified School District.

C.13.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

No changes have occurred to the regulatory setting for public services and utilities since 2010.

C.13.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section addresses whether the changes to the Approved Project would result in any new significant public service impacts or increase the severity of previously identified public services impacts. Section C.13.3.1 restates the significance criteria used in 2010 to determine whether any project changes result in new or more severe significant impacts to the Revised Project or the PG&E Upgrades. Section C.13.3.2 summarizes the impacts and mitigation measures presented in the 2010 Final EIR for ease of reference. Section C.13.3.3 presents the updated impact analysis for the Revised Project, and Section C.13.3.4 addresses proposed changes to one mitigation measure and four APMs. Section C.13.3.5 addresses the environmental impacts that would occur as a result of the PG&E Upgrades, and Section C.13.3.6 describes cumulative impacts.

C.13.3.1 Significance Criteria

The following significance criteria for public services, utilities, and service systems were derived from the Environmental Checklist in CEQA Appendix G. These significance criteria were used for the 2010 Final EIR and are also applied to this Supplemental EIR. They have been amended or supplemented, as appropriate, to address the nature of solar photovoltaic (PV) facilities and transmission line upgrades in general, and the full range of potential impacts related to this Revised Project in particular. An impact of the Revised Project and PG&E Upgrades would be considered significant and would require mitigation if it would:

- Preclude or result in inadequate emergency access or access to public facilities, or increase the need for police, fire, or school services such that specific new facilities need to be constructed to serve the project.
- Increase the demand for water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, water supply, or solid waste facilities such that specific new facilities need to be constructed to serve the project.
- Disrupt the existing utility systems or cause a collocation accident.

Significance conclusions are presented regarding the significance of each identified public services impact, per the significance classification system provided in Section C.1 (Introduction to Environmental Analysis).

C.13.3.2 Approved Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table C.13-1 presents a summary of the impacts and mitigation measures applicable to the Approved Project.

Table C.13-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation: Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems

Impact No. and Text	Mitigation Required	CEQA Conclusion
Impact PS-1: Project construction and operation would place burdensome demands on public services.	PS-1.1: Develop and implement service agreement with San Benito County Fire Department.	Class II for Fire Protection; Class III for Police Protection; No Impact for Schools

Table C.13-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation: Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems

Impact No. and Text	Mitigation Required	CEQA Conclusion
Impact PS-2: Project construction and operation would place demands on local water, wastewater, and solid waste facilities.	None.	Class III
Impact PS-3: Contribute to cumulatively considerable public services, utilities, and service systems impacts.	PS-1.1: Develop and implement service agreement with San Benito County Fire Department.	Class II

C.13.3.3 Revised Solar Project Impacts

Three public services, utilities, and service systems impacts are addressed in this section; cumulative impacts are evaluated in Section C.13.3.6.

Impact PS-1: Project construction and operation would place burdensome demands on public services (Class II)

The size of the peak daily construction workforce has increased from approximately 200 workers (considered in the 2010 Final EIR) to 550 workers in the Revised Project. The duration of construction has decreased from approximately 5 years to approximately 18 months. Although the structural footprint and construction timeline of the Revised Project would be reduced compared to the Approved Project, both construction and operation of the Revised Project would place a demand on fire protection services that substantially exceeds the existing service capacity. As stated in the 2010 Final EIR, worker commute traffic, and construction and operational activities at the project site would increase the potential for accidents, fire, or other medical emergencies. However, as under the Approved Project, funds to employ additional fire protection personnel would be required under Mitigation Measure PS-1.1. With implementation of Mitigation Measure PS-1.1, impacts on fire protection services would be less than significant (Class II).

On-site security for the Revised Project would be provided for in the same manner as described for the Approved Project. However, as described in Section C.14 (Transportation and Circulation), the Revised Project would place substantial additional demand for support on California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers or County Sheriff deputies who are responsible for traffic safety due to the increased construction personnel and resulting traffic. The large volume of construction traffic resulting from the condensed construction schedule would result in as many as 1,150 daily trips on the roads entering the valley. In Section C.14, a new Mitigation Measure TR-1.4 (Prepare Traffic Safety Plan) has been developed to ensure safety given the additional traffic that would occur with the Revised Project. One ~~potential~~ component of this measure would be to provide funding for additional CHP units or County traffic ~~safety officers~~ during the construction of the Revised Project. With implementation of Mitigation Measure TR-1.1 and TR-1.4, impacts on police protection services would be less than significant (Class II).

The permanent labor force for the Revised Project remains unchanged and no impacts to school services would occur because the permanent workforce would be drawn from the surrounding communities and no additional housing or schools would be required.

Impact PS-2: Project construction and operation would place demands on local water, wastewater, and solid waste facilities (Class III)

The water supply and wastewater facilities for the Revised Project would remain as described for the Approved Project. Water supply would be drawn from the local aquifer through existing or new wells. No new public water supply systems would be required during construction or operation of the Revised Project. Section C.15 (Water Resources) addresses the Revised Project's demand on groundwater resources. Wastewater would be discharged through a septic tank and leach field. Demands would not be placed on public water supply and wastewater systems. Given the smaller solar field, the impact on solid waste facilities would be less intense, and would remain adverse but less than significant (Class III).

C.13.3.4 Changes to Adopted Mitigation Measures

One mitigation measure was adopted by the County in 2010 for the Approved Project, and it has been modified to delete references to the San Benito County Fire Department, which no longer provides fire protection services to the project site, and to reflect the requirements of the Hollister Fire Department, which now serves the area. The revised mitigation measures and APMs are shown below. Mitigation Measures and APMs not addressed in this section have not changed and are presented for reference only in Appendix 3.

Mitigation Measures

This proposed change to Mitigation Measure PS-1.1 only allows for additional firefighting entities to serve the project, and for those entities to be paid for the services they provide. It does not change the severity of the impact defined in 2010 (Class II, less than significant with implementation of mitigation).

MM PS-1.1 Develop and implement service agreement with firefighting entities (Supersedes APM PSU-5). The Applicant shall enter into an agreement with a qualified firefighting entity (the Hollister Fire Department, CAL FIRE, or private providers). A fully executed agreement shall be submitted to the Department of Planning and Building, prior to issuance of building permits, which documents the Applicant's agreement to pay the firefighting providers an agreed upon fee based on actual costs to fund additional personnel needed to serve the project site during construction.

To address operational impacts, the Applicant shall ensure that either (a) a sufficient number of permanent employees are trained as volunteer fire fighters or (b) the Applicant will provide fire protection training to its permanent employees. This will allow the project's on-site work force to combat and be first responders to any potential fires occurring on-site or within the vicinity of the project site prior to back up by the appropriate fire department or entity.

Applicant Proposed Measures

The Applicant has also proposed changes to four of the Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) for Public Services, Utilities, and Service Systems. These changes are shown below. The proposed changes to the APMs would not affect the severity of impacts for the Revised Project. The change to APM PSU-2 is more protective of the environment, ensuring that all trash is removed. The change to APM PSU-3 clarifies the recycling commitment of the Applicant and requires compliance with all requirements. The change to AMP PSU-4 only clarifies the APM language. Modified APM PSU-5 has been deleted because it has been superseded by the revised Mitigation Measure PS-1.1.

- APM PSU-2** During operation of the solar farm, the project site would be maintained free of trash.
- APM PSU-3** During construction and operation of the solar farm, all disposable materials that are considered recyclable shall be separated and properly recycled or reused in compliance with federal, State and local law or disposed of as required by a facility authorized to accept such materials.
- APM PSU-4** Hazardous materials shall not be drained onto the ground or into streams or drainage areas. Totally enclosed containment shall be provided for all trash, as well as recyclable materials containers. All construction waste, including trash and litter, garbage, other solid waste, petroleum products, and other potentially hazardous materials, shall be removed to a disposal facility authorized to accept such materials.

C.13.3.5 PG&E Upgrades Impacts

None of the impacts addressed for the solar project would occur as a result of construction or operation of the PG&E Upgrades due to the small number of personnel that would be required, the very short-term nature (12-16 weeks) of the construction activities, and the small permanent changes to PG&E facilities that would result. The PG&E Upgrades would be constructed by existing PG&E personnel or contractors, and no occupied structures would be constructed. The upgrades would not place any additional demands on public utilities or services.

C.13.3.6 Cumulative Impacts

The projects that have been constructed or proposed in the area of potential cumulative effects have changed since 2010, as described in Section D. The operation of the Revised Project and the construction and operation of the PG&E Upgrades would not result in a negative impact on the performance objectives for police or fire services or an increase in school enrollment. As with the Revised Project, the projects included in Section D, Cumulative Projects List, would be expected to implement traffic control measures, where practicable, to ensure that emergency access is not obstructed for fire and police services. Furthermore, with implementation of Mitigation Measure PS-1.1 the Revised Project would not combine with impacts of the PG&E Upgrades or other projects to result in a cumulatively significant impact. Therefore, the Revised Project and PG&E Upgrades' contribution would not be cumulatively considerable and would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated (Class II).

C.13.4 Summary of Impacts

The significance of impacts for public services, utilities, and service systems for the Revised Project and for the PG&E Upgrades is summarized in Sections C.13.4.1 and C.13.4.2. Section C.13.4.3 summarizes the impacts of all project components.

C.13.4.1 Revised Solar Project

There are no changes to the significance of impacts from the conclusions of the Final EIR. The impacts summarized in Table C.13-1 remain accurate. With implementation of Mitigation Measure PS-1.1 and the APMs that would be included as part of the project design, potential project impacts to fire protection services would be less than significant (Class II). Potential impacts to all other public services, utilities, and service systems would be less than significant (Class III).

C.13.4.2 PG&E Upgrades

The PG&E Upgrades would not result in any impacts to public services, utilities, or service systems. No mitigation is required.

C.13.4.3 Overall Significance of Impacts

The overall impacts of the solar project and the PG&E Upgrades would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation (Class II). The PG&E Upgrades would not result in any impacts to public services, utilities, or service systems. For the solar project, potential project impacts to fire protection services would be less than significant with implementation of the proposed changes to Mitigation Measure PS-1.1, and the APMs (Class II). Potential solar project impacts to all other public services, utilities, and service systems would be less than significant (Class III). Cumulative impacts to public services, utilities, and service systems would be less than significant with implementation of mitigation (Class II).

C.13.5 References

- BLM (Bureau of Land Management). 2014. BLM Hollister Field Office, Law Enforcement. http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/hollister/law_enforcement.html. Accessed November 11, 2014.
- FCOE (Fresno County Office of Education). 2006. Fresno County School Districts. http://www.fcoe.org/sites/default/files/documents/FresnoCo_DistsV1_10062006_web.pdf. Accessed November 12, 2014.
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