

C.12 Population and Housing

This section analyzes whether the Revised Project and PG&E Upgrades would result in any new significant impacts to population and housing 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 population and housing. As part of this analysis, the section considers changes to the unemployment rates in the three-county study area, changes to the housing vacancy rates in the three-county study area, and changes to population growth in the three-county study area.

Data sources that were used for this analysis include population and housing data from the California Department of Finance (DOF, 2014) and employment data by industry from the California Employment Development Department (EDD, 2014).

C.12.1 Environmental Setting

This section describes changes to the environmental setting that have occurred since 2010. Section C.12.1.1 describes any changes to the environmental setting that was presented in the 2010 Final EIR. Section C.12.1.2 describes the environmental setting for the area surrounding the PG&E Upgrades.

C.12.1.1 Revised Solar Project

The environmental setting for population and housing for the Revised Project site has remained substantially unchanged since approval of the Final EIR. Population growth in the three counties that were analyzed in the Final EIR has occurred at the anticipated rate. Unemployment rates have decreased but remain elevated. Housing vacancy rates have increased since approval of the Final EIR. The size of the peak daily construction workforce has changed from 200 workers under the Approved Project to 550 workers under the Revised Project. However, the duration of construction activities has been reduced, which reduces the duration of temporary population increase and temporary housing demand. The size of the permanent labor force required for operation has not changed. No on-site worker housing would be built under either the Approved Project or the Revised Project.

C.12.1.2 PG&E Upgrades

The PG&E Upgrades associated with the Revised Project include installation of approximately 17 miles of optical ground wire (OPGW) 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 new microwave communication towers and upgrades to an existing microwave tower. The PG&E transmission system upgrades would include eight new transmission structures that are required to tie the existing Moss Landing–Panoche 230 kV transmission line into the proposed PG&E switchyard, 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.

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).

Upgrades would be constructed by existing PG&E staff over the course of 12 to 16 weeks. In the event that additional staff is required on a temporary basis, this staff would be drawn from one or more of the

three counties that were considered in the 2010 Final EIR, including San Benito, Santa Clara, and Fresno Counties. Housing vacancy rates in those three counties have increased since approval of the Final EIR.

C.12.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

No changes have occurred to the regulatory setting for population and housing since 2010.

C.12.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section addresses whether the changes the Approved Project would result in a new or significant agricultural impacts or increase the severity of previously identified agricultural impacts. Section C.12.3.1 restates the significance criteria used in 2010 to determine whether any project changes result in any new or more severe significant impacts. Section C.12.3.2 summarizes the impacts and mitigation measures presented in the 2010 Final EIR for ease of reference. Section C.12.3.3 presents the updated impact analysis for the Revised Project, and Section C.12.3.4 addresses the impacts of a proposed change in a previously adopted APM. Section C.12.3.5 addresses the environmental impacts that would occur as a result of the PG&E Upgrades, and Section C.12.3.6 describes cumulative impacts.

C.12.3.1 Significance Criteria

The following significance criteria for population and housing 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 SEIR. 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:

- Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly or indirectly.
- Displace substantial numbers of people and/or existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

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

C.12.3.2 Approved Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table C.12-1 presents a summary of the impacts and mitigation measures applicable to the Approved Project.

Table C.12-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation: Population and Housing

Impact No. and Text*	Mitigation Required	CEQA Conclusion
Impact PH-1: Project labor force requirements would create a substantial demand for labor or a change in local employment.	None	Class IV
Impact PH-2: Project labor force would require housing that exceeds the supply of local housing or temporary housing facilities.	None	Class III
Impact PH-3: The project would induce substantial population growth.	None	Class III
Impact PH-5: Contribute to cumulatively considerable population and housing impacts.	None	Class III

*Note that Impact PH-4 was omitted from the Final EIR.

C.12.3.3 Revised Solar Project Impacts

Three population and housing impacts are addressed in this section; cumulative impacts are evaluated in Section C.12.3.6.

Impact PH-1: Project labor force requirements would create a substantial demand for labor or a change in local employment (Class IV)

The required permanent labor force remains unchanged. The size of the peak daily construction workforce has increased from 200 workers to 550 workers. The duration of construction labor demand has decreased from approximately 5 years to approximately 18 months. Based on a review of employment data from the California Employment Development Department, unemployment rates in the three-county study area have declined since publication of the 2010 Final EIR but remain elevated (EDD, 2014). The overall unemployment rate for Fresno County has declined from 18.7% in 2008 (as reported in the 2010 Final EIR) to 10.2% in October of 2014. Construction labor employment for Fresno County has increased from 11,900 in 2008 to 14,900 in October of 2014. The overall unemployment rate for the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara Metropolitan Statistical Area (San Benito and Santa Clara Counties) has declined from 12.3% in 2008 (as reported in the 2010 Final EIR) to 5.2% in October of 2014. Construction labor employment for San Benito and Santa Clara Counties has increased from 28,800 in 2008 to 39,900 in October of 2014. Although unemployment has decreased and construction employment has increased in the three-county study area, unemployment rates remain elevated and the labor demand that would be caused by construction of the Revised Project would be a beneficial impact to the economies of the three-county study area. This impact would remain beneficial (Class IV).

Impact PH-2: Project labor force would require housing that exceeds the supply of local housing or temporary housing facilities (Class III)

No new housing would be constructed in connection with the Revised Project. Housing vacancy rates have increased substantially from 2010 to 2014 in all three counties that are included in the Project study area (DOF, 2014). In Fresno County, the vacancy rate has increased from 6.4% to 8.3%. In San Benito County, the vacancy rate has increased from 3.8% to 6.0%. In Santa Clara County, the vacancy rate has increased from 2.3% to 4.4%. Neither the temporary nor the permanent workforce associated with the Revised Project would place a demand on housing that would exceed local supply. This impact would remain less than significant (Class III).

Impact PH-3: The project would induce substantial population growth (Class III)

Although the peak daily construction workforce has increased from 200 workers to 550 workers, these workers would be drawn primarily from the existing population within the three-county Project study area. Also, any construction workers that relocate due to the Revised Project would represent a temporary increase in population. The size of the permanent labor force required for operation has not changed. Therefore, this impact would remain less than significant (Class III).

C.12.3.4 Changes to Adopted Mitigation Measures

The analysis of Population and Housing in the 2010 Final EIR resulted in no recommended mitigation measures. There were no mitigation measures presented in the Final EIR, and no new mitigation measures have been proposed for the Revised Project. The Applicant has proposed one change to an Applicant Proposed Measure, shown below. Deleted text is shown in strikethrough and added text is

shown in underline. Mitigation Measures and APMs not shown in this section have not changed and are presented for reference only in Appendix 3.

APM PH-1 At least thirty days prior to commencing construction ~~of each phase~~, the applicant will provide construction contractors ~~for that phase~~ with information, including general information on the facility, telephone numbers, addresses and contact information, on temporary housing opportunities, ~~including short term rental housing, hotels, motels, RV parks, and campsites with the ability to accommodate workers for periods of longer than one month~~ in coordination with San Benito County and the San Benito County Chamber of Commerce. The information will be provided on a website, pamphlet or other written material.

C.12.3.5 PG&E Upgrades Impacts

No impacts to population and housing would occur as a result of the PG&E Upgrades. Construction would be performed by existing PG&E staff over a period of 12 to 16 weeks. Construction activities would not create a substantial demand for labor or a change in local employment. No additional housing would be required, and the supply of local and temporary housing would not be exceeded. Construction of the PG&E Upgrades would not induce population growth, and would not contribute to cumulatively considerable population and housing impacts.

C.12.3.6 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. However, even considering the new project list, the Revised Project would not combine with impacts of the PG&E Upgrades or other projects to result in a cumulatively considerable impact (Class III).

C.12.4 Summary of Impacts

The significance of impacts for population and housing for the Revised Project and for the PG&E Upgrades is summarized in Sections C.12.4.1 and C.12.4.2. The overall significance of impacts is described in Section C.12.4.3.

C.12.4.1 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.12-1 remain accurate.

C.12.4.2 PG&E Upgrades

Construction of the PG&E Upgrades would be accomplished using existing staff and would occur over a period of 12 to 16 weeks. Construction and operation of the PG&E Upgrades would not result in any impacts to population and housing and no mitigation is required.

C.12.4.3 Overall Significance of Impacts

The overall impacts of the solar project and the PG&E Upgrades would be less than significant (Class III). The PG&E Upgrades would not result in any impacts to population and housing, and would not combine with the impacts of the solar project to result in any impacts. For the solar project, impacts to

employment (Impact PH-1) were found to be beneficial, and not adverse, as the Revised Project would create jobs and reduce unemployment. Impacts resulting from the workforce exceeding the capacity for housing (Impact PH-2) and substantially increasing the local population (Impact PH-3) would be less than significant with implementation of APM PH-1 (Provide construction workers with information about available temporary housing). The full text of this measure is shown in Section B.10 (Applicant Proposed Measures) of the Project Description in this Supplemental EIR. The cumulative impacts of both the Revised Project and the PG&E Upgrades would be less than significant (Class III).

C.12.5 References

DOF (State of California, Department of Finance). 2014. E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State — January 1, 2011–2014. Sacramento, California, May 2014.

EDD (State of California, Employment Development Department). 2014. Employment by Industry Data. [online]: http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/LMID/Employment_by_Industry_Data.html. Accessed 20 November 2014.