

F. Other CEQA Considerations

This section presents several topics required by CEQA: growth-inducing effects (Section F.1), significant irreversible commitment of resources (Section F.2), significant effects of the Revised Project (Section F.3), and energy conservation (Section F.4).

F.1 Growth-Inducing Effects

Section 15126.2(d) of the State CEQA Guidelines provides the following guidance on growth-inducing impacts: a project is identified as growth inducing if it “could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment.” As discussed below, none of the proposed changes to the Approved Project that comprise the Revised Project would create any new growth-inducing impacts or substantially increase the severity of any previously identified growth-inducing impacts..

F.1.1 Employment and Population Growth

Construction Workforce. The Revised Project would increase the peak workforce from 200 workers per day to 550 workers per day. This work would occur over approximately 18 months. Workers are expected to be hired from San Benito, Santa Clara, and Fresno Counties, with 75 percent of the workforce anticipated from the Hollister area.

- Daytime construction workforce: 100 to 500 individuals
- Nighttime construction workforce: 20 to 50 individuals

Due to the overall increase in construction workers, the demand for temporary accommodations would be greater with the Revised Project during the 18 month construction period, and therefore, have a greater potential to displace other travelers and seasonal residents, which was an impact described in the 2010 Final EIR. While the study area vacancy rate and the availability of temporary accommodation in the area indicate that the area has the capacity to temporarily house this workforce, it would do so to the exclusion of other travelers and seasonal residents. Additionally, many of the accommodations available, such as recreational campsites, are not designed for long-term temporary residents and such use would deteriorate or degrade the facilities. As such, demand for temporary accommodations during construction would result in significant impacts to the existing housing supply. At the same time, due to the shortened construction schedule, the demand on temporary accommodations would end after 18 months as opposed to 5 years with the Approved Project. Thus, the temporary increase in demand is off-set by the shortened construction period. Nonetheless, to address this short term impact on temporary accommodations, the Revised Project would implement the previously approved Applicant Proposed Measure for Population and Housing for the Approved Project, which requires coordination with San Benito County to identify qualified accommodations and provide that information to construction contractors. Implementation of this measure would alleviate the temporary direct and indirect population growth impacts resulting from worker relocation.

Construction workers would be drawn from the surrounding counties, including Fresno, San Benito, and Santa Clara Counties. Data from the State of California Employment Development Department shows that the combined construction labor force for these three counties for 2011 (the most recent year for which complete data is available) is 43,100 workers. A maximum of 550 workers hired from within these three counties would represent approximately 1.3 percent of the total construction labor force. While a single project utilizing 1.3 percent of the total construction labor force of the study area would be con-

sidered a substantial demand, considering the high unemployment rate in the area, this would be a beneficial impact on the study area. As a short-term activity, the construction phase would not trigger additional population growth in the area.

Operational Workforce. Operation of the Revised Project would require the same number of full time staff (up to 50) at Project build-out as the Approved Project. Therefore, the potential housing and growth inducement impacts described in the 2010 Final EIR would equally apply to the Revised Project. As described in Section C.12 (Population and Housing), the 2014 housing vacancy rates for Fresno, San Benito, and Santa Clara Counties, respectively, are: 8.3%, 6.0%, and 4.4%. An influx of 145 individuals from 50 operation employees to the three-county study area would not create a demand for housing that exceeds the existing supply and would warrant the construction of new housing, which was the conclusion of the 2010 Final EIR.

F.1.2 Increased Power Generation

None of the changes associated with the Revised Project would alter the 2010 Final EIR's analysis and conclusions regarding the impact of increased power generation on future growth. The 2010 Final EIR concluded that the project would supply energy to accommodate and support existing demand and projected growth, but it would not foster any new growth, because (1) the additional energy would be used to ease the burdens of meeting existing statewide energy demands within and beyond the area of the project; (2) the energy would be used to support already-projected growth; or (3) the factors affecting growth are so diverse that any potential connection between additional energy production and growth would necessarily be too speculative and tenuous to merit extensive analysis.

F.1.3 PG&E Upgrades

The capacity of the electrical transmission capacity of the PG&E system would not be increased as a result of implementation of the Revised Project. The proposed PG&E upgrades are limited to primary and secondary telecommunication services and as such would not induce population growth.

F.2 Significant Irreversible Commitment of Resources

Section 15126.2(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines states that irreversible commitments of resources should be evaluated to assure that such consumption is justified. Uses of nonrenewable resources during construction of the Project may be irreversible because a large commitment of such resources makes removal or nonuse thereafter unlikely and certain types of impacts may commit future generations to similar uses. None of the components of the Revised Project would cause any new irreversible impacts that were not already addressed in the 2010 Final EIR. However, due to the reduced size of Project footprint and increased amount of conserved open space, the irreversible impacts described in the 2010 Final EIR would be reduced. Moreover, it is important to note that, like the Approved Project, the Revised Project would return the project site to vacant rangeland after the useful life of the solar project and preserve the site in a conservation easement in perpetuity. Thus, any resources that may be impacted during project construction and once the project is operational may recover after the project is decommissioned.

F.3 Significant Effects that Cannot be Avoided

Section 15126.2(b) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that the EIR describe any significant impacts, including those that can be mitigated but not reduced to less-than-significant levels. Potential environ-

mental effects of the incremental changes to the Approved Project that comprise the Revised Project are analyzed in Section C of this SEIR. The 2010 Final EIR concluded that the Approved Project (Alternative A Revised) would result in significant and unavoidable aesthetics and construction noise impacts. Due to the accelerated construction schedule, there would be an increase in construction noise levels and the impact of the Revised Project would remain significant and unavoidable. Aesthetic impacts resulting from implementation of the Revised Project would be reduced due to the reduced size of the project, but would remain significant and unavoidable.

F.4 Energy Conservation

Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines, Energy Conservation, requires that energy implications are considered in project decisions (Public Resources Code Section 21100(b)(3)). None of the components of the Revised Project require modification of the 2010 Final EIR's analysis of energy conservation. The prior analysis would apply equally to the Revised Project.

F.5 References

County (San Benito County). 2010. Chapter 3 Land Use, General Plan Background Report (Public Review Draft). <http://www.sanbenitogpu.com/docs.html>. Accessed April 2010.