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DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND INITIAL STUDY

PROJECT TITLE: General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 2010-03 (Renewable Solar and Wind Energy)

PROJECT LOCATION: County-wide.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: An update to the Inyo County General Plan is proposed to address renewable solar and wind energy development (refer to Attachment 1). As part of the update, a General Plan Land Use Designation Overlay is proposed in which renewable energy projects, specifically solar and wind, may be developed, based on site specific studies pursuant to the County's Renewable Energy Ordinance and other applicable State, federal, and local laws. Other updates proposed include the following: identifying appropriate means to develop renewable wind and solar energy resources, provided that social, economic, and environmental impacts are minimized; offsetting costs to the County and lost economic development potential, and mitigation of economic effects; working to protect military readiness, and; considering conversions of lands utilized for agriculture, mining, and recreation.

FINDINGS: An Initial Study and Evaluation of Potential Impacts has been prepared by the Planning Department (attached). The Initial Study, including an environmental checklist, indicates that the proposed project would not have a significant adverse impact on the environment for the following reasons:

A. The proposed GPA updates the Inyo County General Plan to address appropriate renewable wind and solar energy development. No conflicts exist with goals and policies of the General Plan, and the GPA is consistent with the Inyo County General Plan.

B. The proposed GPA is consistent with the requirements of the Title 18 (Zoning), Chapter 21.04 et seq. (Renewable Energy), and other sections of the Inyo County Code (ICC).

C. The proposed GPA will not directly result in any significant physical change to the environment. Future renewable wind and solar energy projects may result in potentially significant indirect environmental impacts. With mitigation, such potential adverse environmental impacts are not expected to exceed thresholds of significance, either individually or cumulatively. Possible mitigation measures for individual projects are described in the attached Initial Study. Mitigation measures, such as those described, will be implemented as deemed necessary based on site-specific studies for individual projects.

D. Based upon the Initial Study and environmental evaluation of the proposed project, it has been found the project with mitigation does not have the potential to create a significant impact on flora or fauna; natural, scenic and historic resources; the local economy; or, public health and welfare. This constitutes a negative finding for each of the Mandatory findings required pursuant to Section 15065 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

The review period (30 day review) for this Mitigated Negative Declaration expires on January 17, 2011. Inyo County is not required to respond to any comments received after this date. Additional information is available from the Inyo County Planning Department. Please contact Joshua Hart, AICP, Planning Director, at (760) 878-0263 or jhart@inyocounty.us if you have any questions regarding this project.

Joshua Hart, AICP
Director, Inyo County Planning Department

12-15-10
Date

INYO LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

CEQA APPENDIX G: INITIAL STUDY & ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.

3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from Section XVII, "Earlier Analyses," may be cross-referenced).

5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.

b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.

c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside

document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.

9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance issues.

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APPENDIX G: CEQA INITIAL STUDY & ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

1. Project title: General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 2010-03 (Renewable Solar and Wind Energy).

2. Lead agency name and address: Inyo County, P.O. Drawer L, Independence, CA 93526.

3. Contact person and phone number: Joshua Hart, AICP, Planning Director, (760) 878-0263.

4. Project location: County-wide.

5. Project sponsor's name and address: Inyo County, P.O. Drawer L, Independence, CA 93526.

6. General Plan designation: All

7. Zoning: All

8. Description of project (*Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary):* An update to the Inyo County General Plan is proposed to address renewable solar and wind energy development (refer to Attachment 1). As part of the update, a General Plan Land Use Designation Overlay is proposed in which renewable energy projects, specifically wind and solar, may be developed, based on site specific studies pursuant to the County's Renewable Energy Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1158), and other applicable State, federal, and local laws. Other updates proposed include identifying appropriate means to develop renewable wind and solar energy resources, provided that social, economic, and environmental impacts are minimized; offsetting costs to the County and lost economic development potential, and mitigation of economic effects; working to protect military readiness, and; considering conversions of lands utilized for agriculture, mining, recreation, and other uses.

Background

Federal, State, and local governments have instituted goals for renewable energy, which has resulted in demand to develop renewable energy resources in Inyo County. A variety of renewable energy planning efforts have been completed or are underway to address renewable energy, including the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI), the Bureau of Land Management's Transmission Corridor, Wind, Geothermal, and Solar Environmental Impact Statements, the Desert Renewable Energy Transmission Plan (DRECP), and the California Transmission Planning Group (CTPG), as well as a variety of renewable energy initiatives in the neighboring State of Nevada.[1]

[1] Refer to http://www.inyoplanning.org/RenewableNewPage.htm for more information regarding these planning efforts.

The County adopted Ordinance No. 1158 regarding renewable wind and solar energy on August 17, 2010, which is referred to herein as the Renewable Energy Ordinance. This Ordinance encourages and regulates such renewable energy development, specifically wind and solar, and requires that renewable energy developers apply for Renewable Energy Permit or Renewable Energy Impact Determination from or enter into a Renewable Energy Development Agreement with the County prior to commencing construction of renewable energy projects.

General Plan Amendment

The County has been participating in the above referenced processes, and it has become apparent that the existing Inyo County General Plan[2] addresses renewable wind and solar energy haphazardly, as much of it was developed prior to the current efforts to develop renewable energy. Therefore, an update of the County's General Plan is proposed to guide appropriate renewable wind and solar energy development, direct renewable energy developers where to investigate solar and wind renewable energy development potential, and incorporate community input into where renewable wind and solar energy development might occur. A draft GPA has been developed through an extensive outreach process, which is included in Attachment 1, and discussed below:

Government Element: the existing Government Element states the following:

> Development of energy resources on both public and private lands be encouraged with the policies of the County to develop these energy resources within the bounds of economic reason and sound environmental health. Therefore, the Board supports the following policies.
>
> a. The sound development of any and all energy resources, including, but not limited to geothermal, wind, biomass, and solar.
> b. The use of peer-reviewed science in the assessment of impacts related to energy resource development.
> c. The development of adequate utility corridors necessary for the transmission of newly generated energy.

No update to the Government Element is proposed.

Land Use Element: the current General Plan Land Use Element provides for wind and solar renewable energy development in the following land use designations: State and Federal Lands (SFL), Public Service Facilities (PF), Agricultural (A), and General Industrial (GI). These land use designations encompass more than 90 percent of the County.

Through the County's renewable energy planning efforts, areas where renewable wind and solar energy development might and might not be appropriate have been developed and mapped based on a variety of criteria and public input. Criteria utilized at the beginning of the process included (1) areas with known interest in renewable wind and solar energy development; (2) proximity to transmission and electrical conveyance facilities, and (3) appropriate terrain. Through an extensive public engagement effort, the maps have been refined and updated iteratively. The General Plan Land Use Designation Overlay maps now show areas where it may be appropriate to develop

[2] Refer to http://www.inyoplanning.org/general_plan/index.htm for the existing General Plan.

renewable wind and solar energy projects based on a more comprehensive set of criteria. Commercial scale wind and solar renewable energy development in areas outside of the overlay will not be permitted. Wind and solar energy development for individual homes and businesses may be developed through other existing County regulations, such as building permit issuance for solar installations intended primarily for on-site energy consumption and ICC Chapter 18.79 (Regulation of Small Wind Energy Conversion Systems).

Within the proposed Solar and Wind Energy Land Use Designation Overlay, wind and solar renewable energy projects may be considered pursuant to appropriate environmental review and the County's Renewable Energy Ordinance and other applicable local, State, and federal laws; potential social, economic, and environmental impacts must be minimized to the extent feasible. Language to address transmission and protect military readiness is also proposed. These actions will restrict the potential for renewable solar and wind energy development to about 15 percent of the County.

Public Services and Facilities Element: the existing Public Services and Facilities Element does not address wind and solar renewable energy. The proposed update includes new policies to encourage appropriate development of renewable wind and solar energy resources and associated transmission, provided that social, economic, and environmental impacts are minimized.

Economic Development Element: the existing Economic Development Element does not specifically address renewable energy. A new policy is proposed to encourage offsetting costs to the County to accommodate renewable wind and solar energy development and lost economic development potential due to the opportunity cost of developing wind and solar renewable energy, as well as requiring mitigation of potential economic impacts from renewable wind and solar energy development.

Housing Element: the Existing Housing Element does not address specifically commercial-scale renewable wind and solar energy development, but addresses housing issues more broadly. The existing goals and policies are adequate to address housing needs that might arise from renewable wind and solar energy development, and no changes are proposed.

Circulation Element: the existing Circulation Element provides that the County shall consider the visual and environmental impacts of regional conveyance corridors, encourage co-location of such corridors, provides for benefits to the County for such corridors, and that transmission facilities will be designed and located to not impact the health, safety, or welfare of residents and visitors. No changes are proposed.

Conservation/Open Space Element: the Conservation/Open Space Element includes numerous policies, goals, and implementation measures to minimize impacts from development on the natural and open space environments that are applicable to wind and solar renewable energy development. New policies, goals, and implementation measures specific to renewable wind and solar energy development are proposed. These include but are not limited to the following: (1) consider conversions of productive agricultural lands; (2) minimize impacts from renewable wind and solar energy development to the social, economic, and environmental resources of the County; (3) encourage minimizing water consumption and use of potable water; (4) siting and screening to minimize significant changes to the visual environment, and; (5) minimize impacts to recreational access.

Public Safety Element: the existing Public Safety Element includes goals, policies, and implementation measures that may be relevant to renewable wind and solar energy development. New implementation measures for renewable wind and solar energy are proposed to encourage air quality enhancements and minimize noise.

9. <u>Surrounding land uses and setting</u>: (*Briefly describe the project's surroundings*): the proposed GPA is County-wide. The County includes a wide variety of land uses, but is predominantly rural. Most of the population resides in the Owens Valley, which runs along the County's western boundary. Death Valley National Park encompasses a large percentage of the County, with China Lake Air Weapons Naval Station, the Inyo National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and City of Los Angeles exercising land use authority over much of the remainder of the County. Private lands represent less than two percent of lands in the County, and are mostly concentrated in the Owens Valley and southeastern Inyo County.

10. <u>Other public agencies whose approval is required</u> (*e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement*): None; individual renewable wind and solar energy projects which may be pursued under this GPA may require permits from a variety of agencies, including the California Energy Commission, Public Utilities Commission, State Lands Commission, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Defense, City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and others as necessary

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:
The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☒Aesthetics Resources	☒Agriculture and Forestry	☒Air Quality
☒Biological Resources	☒Cultural Resources	☒Geology /Soils
☒Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☒Hazards & Haz. Materials	☒Hydrology / Water Quality
☒Land Use / Planning	☒ Mineral Resources	☒Noise
☒Population / Housing	☒Public Services	☒Recreation
☒Transportation/Traffic	☒Utilities / Service Systems	☒Mandatory Findings of Sig.

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Joshua Hart, AICP
Planning Director
Inyo County Planning Department

12-15-10
Date

INYO COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. AESTHETICS -- Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: The proposed GPA will not directly impact any scenic resource, as it is a policy document and does not permit development of renewable wind or solar energy. The County does include scenic vistas and scenic highway segments. Development of renewable wind or solar energy, if it occurs, is expected to indirectly alter views in surrounding areas, potentially affecting scenic vistas, scenic resources, and the visual character and quality, as well as introducing new sources of light and glare.*

The Inyo County General Plan addresses visual resources in Section 8.8 (Visual Resources). Goals, policies, and implementation measures are included to preserve and protect resources throughout the County that contribute to a unique visual experience for visitors and quality of life for County residents, control light and glare, and screening. The proposed GPA works to further minimize impacts regarding aesthetics. Based on site-specific studies, appropriate best management practices (BMP), such as those identified in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects, may be implemented. These include, but are not limited to, the following: consider, as early as possible, visual resources in the project planning and siting phases; perform visual mitigation planning and design through field assessments, applied global positioning system technology, photo documentation, use of computer-aided design and development software, and visual simulations; evaluate the potential visual impacts on public parklands and National Historic Trails and identify appropriate mitigation measures; avoid "skylining" of transmission and other structures; site projects away from prominent landscape features; take advantage of both topography and vegetation as screening devices to restrict views of projects from visually sensitive areas; where screening topography and vegetation are absent, use natural-looking earthwork berms and vegetative or architectural screening; match and repeat the form, line, color, and texture of the existing landscape when siting and designing facilities, structures, roads, and other project elements; minimize the number of structures; minimize the need for and amount of lighting on ancillary structures; paint wind turbine towers with non-reflective coating, and; prepare a detailed analysis of potential glare effects associated with solar energy collectors/reflectors and associated facilities. Additional BMPs and mitigation concepts are provided in the Wind, Solar, and Transmission Corridor EISs, and these and other generally accepted guidelines may be implemented based on site-specific studies.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect aesthetic impacts. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce impacts to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES: In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: No Farmland or Williamson Act Contracts exist in the County. No forest land or timberland is expected to be altered by renewable wind and solar energy development. Government Element Goal Gov-6 indicates that it is the policy of the County to protect agricultural land and promote the continuation of agricultural pursuits, and General Plan Section 8.3 (Agriculture) includes goals, policies, and implementation measures to provide and maintain a viable and diverse agricultural industry. The proposed GPA includes policies, goals, and implementation measures to minimize potential impacts on the physical, social, and economic environment of the County, including considering conversion of agricultural lands for renewable wind and solar energy development. Through the permitting process for wind and solar renewable energy projects, any conversions of agricultural lands will be evaluated, and if such conversions are deemed adverse, alternative sites may be considered that avoid or minimize conversion of agricultural lands. Potential indirect impact to agricultural lands will also be evaluated, and mitigation measures may be identified to reduce any such impacts to less than significant levels, such as, but not limited to, institution of Williamson Act contracts, easements for noise, dust, and odors, and minimizing water use. Impacts are expected to be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
III. AIR QUALITY: Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

***Discussion**: The proposed GPA will not directly result in air quality impacts. Indirectly, new renewable wind and solar energy development that could occur due to the GPA will result in construction and operation emissions. Particulate emissions from the Owens Lakebed result in exceedances of State and federal air quality regulations regionally for PM10, a component of dust. Concentrations of ozone in portions of southern Inyo County do not comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone, a condition most likely due to transport from southern California and the San Joaquin Valley, and are being considered for inclusion in NAAQS nonattainment boundaries for ozone.*

Pollutant emissions during construction of individual projects may temporarily contribute to exceedances of air quality standards and potentially contribute to exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Section 9.2 of the General Plan (Air Quality) addresses air quality issues, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to provide good air quality for Inyo County to reduce impacts to human health and the economy, including requiring dust suppression during excavation, grading, and site preparation activities. The proposed GPA works to further minimize impacts regarding air quality. Standard BMPs, rules, guidelines, and regulations may be implemented to minimize air quality impacts, such as those in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: prepare and comply with a dust abatement plan that addresses fugitive dust emissions during project construction and operation, in cooperation with the local air quality management district; for combustion emission sources, use best available emission controls; control dust along main access roads through the facility to the power block by either paving, using soil binders or methods that provide a level of control similar to paving; stabilize unpaved construction roads and unpaved operational site roads (as they are being constructed) with a non-toxic soil stabilizer or soil weighting agent that can be determined to be as efficient or more efficient for fugitive dust control as approved soil stabilizers, will not result in loss of vegetation, or increase other environmental impacts; use wind erosion control techniques (such as windbreaks, chemical dust suppressants, and/or vegetation) where soils are disturbed in construction, access and maintenance routes, and materials stock pile areas; consider prevailing wind directions and the nearest sensitive receptors when planning facility configuration and cooling tower location, and; revegetate or otherwise stabilize soils in the long term. Additional BMPs and mitigation concepts are provided in the Wind, Solar, and Transmission Corridor EISs, and these and other measures may be implemented based on site-specific studies.

Over the long-term, emissions from vehicle traffic, heating, cooling, and other activities related to renewable wind and solar energy development are expected be limited. Renewable energy development will work to minimize emissions of global-warming gases and criteria pollutants from energy generation, thereby reducing such emissions over the long term.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

Short-term construction impacts are expected to be minimized through mitigation measures, BMPs, and compliance with relevant standards, rules, regulations, and policies. No substantial conflict with applicable air quality plans is expected, and long-term impact is expected to be beneficial.

Odors from renewable wind and solar energy development are expected to be minimal, and most likely unnoticeable. No impacts or less than significant impacts will result.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential air quality impacts. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant indirect impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

***Discussion**: According to the Inyo County General Plan Background Report, Inyo County can be divided into four major eco-provinces: the eastern Sierra Nevada, the Owens Valley, the White-Inyo Mountains, and the Mojave Desert. The geology, climate, flora, and fauna of these regions intermingle, creating a rich and interesting array of biological communities. Numerous special status species are known to occur in the County, and additional special status species not know to exist in the County could be present. Species discussed in the Report include the Owens pupfish and Owens tui chub, Owens speckled dace, Long Valley speckled dace, Inyo County mariposa lily, Owens Valley checker bloom, Fish Slough springsnail, Owens Valley springsnail, Aarhal's springsnail, and Owens Valley vole, Swainson's hawk, Townsend's big-eared bat, Amargosa vole, snowy plover, and various bird species of the Owens Valley. Species of particular potential*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

relevance to renewable wind and solar energy projects include Black Toad, Mohave ground squirrel, desert tortoise, birds and bats, and Amargosa vole. Additionally, sensitive habitats, wetlands, migratory corridors, wildlife nursery sites, and riparian areas may be present throughout the County in areas where renewable wind and solar energy resources may be developed.

The proposed GPA will not directly impact biological resources. Construction and operation phases for renewable wind and solar energy projects may result in potential indirect temporary and long-term impacts to biological resources. No biology-related ordinances currently apply.

Section 8.6 of the General Plan (Biological Resources) addresses biology issues, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to maintain and enhance biological diversity and healthy ecosystems throughout the County. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential environmental, social, and economic impacts. Numerous BMPs, rules, regulations, policies, programs, and guidelines are available to address potential impacts to biological resources, including those outlined in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: design and site in consultation with permitting agencies to avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive and unique habitats and wildlife species; locate facilities so they do not disrupt sand transport processes nor remove a sand source that contributes to sand dune systems harboring listed or otherwise sensitive species; avoid armoring nearby dune system sand sources; include, as appropriate, a draft common raven management plan; using modern and cost effective zero liquid discharge technologies for evaporation ponds; consult with wildlife agencies to determine the need for and/or feasibility of conducting desert tortoise translocation; provide a draft habitat compensation plan; provide funding mechanism to address facility closure and habitat restoration; install and maintain facility lighting to prevent up and side casting of light towards wildlife habitat; bury electrical collector lines to minimize surface disturbance; ensure that vehicular traffic is confined to existing routes of travel to and from the project site, and prohibit, within project boundaries, cross country vehicle and equipment use outside of approved designated work areas; designate a qualified biologist responsible for overseeing compliance with biological resources BMPs during mobilization, ground disturbance, grading, construction, operation, and closure/decommissioning or project abandonment; develop an integrated weed management plan; avoid, to the extent possible, areas of high succulent/yucca/cactus density; develop a bat and avian protection plan to protect bats and birds, while improving conservation and safety and reliability for utility customers; if guy wires are necessary for permanent or temporary towers, use bird flight diverters or high visibility marking devices; if Mohave ground squirrels are found in burrows, ensure the qualified biologist will relocate the animal to a burrow at an approved protected offsite location; locate turbines to avoid separating birds and bats from their daily roosting, feeding, or nesting sites if documented that the turbines' presence poses a risk to species; monitor to determine if there is a potential for bird incineration, blinding, or heat stress mortality, and; use lights on heliostat towers to minimize avian collision risk. Additional BMPs and mitigation concepts are provided in the Wind, Solar, and Transmission Corridor EISs, and these and other measures may be implemented based on site-specific studies. Development of the DRECP is expected to provide further guidance and potential mitigation possibilities.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts to biological resources. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant indirect impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. The proposed GPA is expected to compliment the DRECP, which is currently being formulated, and renewable energy development will be required to be consistent with the DRECP, the West Mojave Plan, any plan developed for the Owens Lakebed, or other applicable habitat conservation or natural community conservation plans. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: The history and prehistory of Inyo County is long and rich. According to the General Plan Background Report, prior to contact with Europeans, this can be divided in several periods: (1) Lake Mojave [9,000-6,000 before present (BP)]; (2) Newberry (3,150-1,350 BP); (3) Haiwee (1,350-650), and; Marana (600 BP – contact). This long period of human habitation has provided a rich array of known and unknown cultural resources. Ethnographically, the County was largely inhabited by two groups at contact: the Owens Valley Paiute and the Panamint (Koso) Shoshone. The first recorded Euroamerican expedition occurred in 1834, followed by settlement and development. In addition to pre-contact cultural resources, numerous hamlets, mining facilities, agricultural uses, and other historical resources are scattered throughout the County in varying conditions.*

The proposed GPA will not directly impact cultural resources. Indirectly, development of individual renewable wind and solar energy projects has the potential to impact cultural resources. General Plan Section 8.7 (Cultural Resources) addresses such resources, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to preserve and promote the historic and prehistoric cultural heritage of the County, including preserving and protecting key resources that have contributed to the social, political, and economic history and prehistory of the area. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential environmental, social, and economic impacts. Numerous BMPs, guidelines, policies, rules, and regulations provide guidance to address potential impacts, including those detailed in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: retain a qualified cultural resources specialist to write and carry out a monitoring and mitigation plan or agreement; hire a qualified archaeological monitor to oversee project excavations; encourage the use of existing right-of-way by upgrading existing transmission facilities; conduct, as appropriate, an initial scoping assessment to determine whether proposed construction activities would disturb formations that may contain important paleontological resources; develop a protocol for unexpected paleontological discoveries; bring to the immediate attention of the appropriate permitting agencies unexpected discovery of fossils during construction, and; halt work near the discovery to avoid further disturbance to the resources during evaluation and development of appropriate mitigation measures. Additional BMPs and mitigation concepts are provided in the Wind, Solar, and Transmission Corridor EISs, and these and other measures may be implemented based on site-specific studies. Development of the DRECP is expected to provide further guidance and potential mitigation possibilities.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts to cultural resources. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. In the event that unknown archaeological resources and/or human remains are disturbed during construction of individual projects, compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 and standard County policies will further work to preclude potentially significant impacts. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS: Would the project:

a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☒	☐	☐
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☒	☐	☐

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☒	☐	☐
iv) Landslides?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion: *According to the General Plan Background Report, Inyo County is located in the western portion of the Great Basin region in the Basin and Range Physiographic Province and includes the diverse topography of Owens, Death, and Saline/Eureka Valleys and their surrounding mountain ranges--the Sierra Nevada, White-Inyo, Coso, and Panamint Mountains. The Owens, Death, and Panamint valleys are underlain by fault zones, and the Sierra Nevada, White-Inyo, and Panamint ranges contain localized networks of faults, many of which have been active in the recent geologic past. Because numerous active faults are present, the potential for earthquake-induced phenomena such as groundshaking, ground failure (including liquefaction), and landslides is high. Low-magnitude earthquakes occur almost daily throughout the County, and earthquakes of highly destructive magnitudes have been recorded in recent geologic history. Volcanic activity is also known to occur, and active areas have been identified throughout the county; although these areas are active, none of them are known to pose a significant hazard. More likely to affect the area is an eruption of the Long Valley Caldera in Mono County.*

The GPA will not result in any direct impact regarding geology and soils. Construction activities will occur if renewable wind and solar energy is developed, and will result in short-term disturbance of soils and emplacement of infrastructure. Alquist-Priolo zones are designated throughout the County, which is subject to periodic strong seismic ground motion, related instability, and potential rupture of known and unknown faults. Areas of unstable geologic units, such as expansive soils, are known to exist. Indirectly, development of renewable wind and solar energy could result in potentially significant impacts in these regards. Minimal use of septic systems or alternative waste disposal systems is anticipated, and compliance with existing regulations for such systems is expected to ensure less than significant impacts in terms of soil capacity and wastewater disposal.

General Plan Sections 8.2 (Soils) and 9.6 (Geologic and Seismic Hazards) address geology and soils issues, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures to recognize development limitations of soil types in review and approval of future development projects to protect public health and safety, and minimize exposure to hazards and structural damage from geologic and seismic conditions. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential environmental, social, and economic impacts. The Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects incorporates BMPs and guidance for renewable wind and solar energy projects, and these may be implemented in conjunction with numerous other BMPs, rules, regulations, and policies addressing geological hazards, such as standard Building Code requirements. These include, but are not limited to, preparing and carrying out a drainage, erosion, and sedimentation control plan that ensures proper protection of water quality and soil resources, demonstrates no increase in offsite flooding potential, and includes provisions for project site stormwater and sediment retention.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding geology and soils. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

Adherence to standard building techniques will ensure that any projects are undertaken to withstand probabilistic seismic hazards and localized geologic and soils conditions, and minimize erosion. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

VII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS:
Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

The GPA will not directly result in greenhouse gas emissions. Indirectly during construction of individual projects, greenhouse gas emissions will occur on a temporary basis. As discussed in Section III, it is expected that mitigation measures will reduce any potentially significant impacts from pollutant emissions to less than significant levels. Over the long-term, development of renewable energy will work to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and the GPA will support plans, policies, and regulations to reduce such emissions. Limited emissions are anticipated from workers commuting to and from renewable wind and solar energy production facilities and maintenance activities, but these emissions will be substantially offset by the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from non-renewable energy production that would have occurred elsewhere. Long-term impacts are expected to be beneficial.

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:
Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☒	☐	☐
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☒	☐	☐

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☒	☐	☐
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion: *The GPA will not directly alter the environment in terms of hazards or hazardous materials. However, future development of renewable wind and solar energy may result in potentially significant indirect impacts in these regards. For example, such development may be located in the vicinity of military installations, public airports, and/or private airstrips, and could result in safety issues for military and/or aircraft operations, particularly from physical obstructions due to wind and power towers, but also from radar interference and intense heat sources that may conflict with military testing activities. Sites included on lists compiled to Government Code Section 65962.5 could be developed. Although relatively limited, some use of hazardous materials is expected in construction and operation of renewable wind and solar energy projects. Much of the County is susceptible to wildland fire hazards.*

General Plan Sections 4.3 (Public Services and Utilities), 7.7 (Aviation) and 9.5 (Wildfire Hazard) address airport and fire issues, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures to provide for adequate fire protection facilities, prevent wildfires and provide public safety from wildfire hazards, and promote land use compatibility of airports with the surrounding environment. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential environmental, social, and economic impacts, including those related to hazards and hazardous materials, such as aircraft operations. Numerous BMPs, policies, procedures, rules and regulations are available to address hazards and hazardous materials, such as those described in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: ensure that workers are fully trained to properly handle and are informed about each of the hazardous materials to be used on-site; prepare a hazardous materials management plan addressing storage, use, transportation, and disposal of each hazardous material anticipated to be used, stored, or transported to the site; if environmental site assessments determine that remediation is necessary, ensure the remediation activities are conducted in accordance with the appropriate regulatory agency requirements and oversight; ensure secondary containment is provided for onsite hazardous and extremely hazardous materials and waste storage, including fuel; in the event of an accidental hazardous waste release to the environment, document the event, including a root cause analysis, appropriate corrective actions taken, and a characterization of the resulting environmental or health and safety impacts; prepare a health and safety program to protect workers and the public during construction, operation, repowering, retrofitting, and closure/decommissioning or abandonment; install and maintain permanent fencing around electrical substations and mechanical and electrical generation equipment, and; keep lighting at operation and maintenance facilities and substations located within 0.5 mile of the turbines to the minimum required for meeting Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines, and safety and security needs.

Any business or agency that uses or stores hazardous materials is subject to regulation by the Inyo County Environmental Health Department, which has been appointed a Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) by the California Department of Toxic Substance Control. A CUPA may oversee all local aspects of hazardous materials and waste. Any business or agency that stores or uses hazardous materials is required to file a business plan with CUPA and may also be required to file a Risk Management Plan (RMP) related to spill prevention measures.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential impacts regarding hazards and hazardous materials. Based on specific site location and conditions, potential interference with airport and military operations will be assessed; the use, transport, and storage of hazardous materials, including in relation to any nearby schools or existing contamination, will be analyzed; and wildland fire hazards will be addressed in coordination with fire protection service providers. Appropriate adjustments to emergency response plans, if any, will be coordinated through the development review process and periodic plan updates. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant indirect impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY: Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on or off-site?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☒	☐	☐
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☒	☐	☐
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☒	☐	☐
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion: *According to the General Plan Background Report, much of the minimal precipitation in Inyo County is snowfall during the winter, although summer thunderstorms can produce localized heavy rainfall. A total of 13 watersheds are located partially or entirely within the county, and all of these are internal drainages. With the exception of the Owens River and some of the larger tributaries, most of the drainages flow only until they seep into porous alluvial deposits. The Owens River, fed from several streams that drain the Sierra Nevada, flows year round. Most of the water, however, is diverted by and exported to the City of Los Angeles through the Los Angeles Aqueduct. The Amargosa River is a desert river that flows only intermittently throughout the year in southeastern Inyo County. Groundwater resources in Inyo County are generally located within 15 alluvial-filled valleys formed by layers of clays, silts, sands, and gravels. These basins are usually recharged with surface water flows that infiltrate the alluvial deposits.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

The GPA will not directly alter any hydrological characteristics. Indirectly, construction and operation of renewable wind and solar energy projects has the potential to affect water quality, utilize groundwater, alter surface water flows and associated sedimentation and flooding patterns, alter drainage and sedimentation patterns, and result in development within 100-year flood hazard areas or other areas prone to flooding and/or mudflows. None of the proposed Overlay areas are located in close proximity downstream from any levees or dams, and less than significant impacts are expected in the unlikely event of failure of such facilities. No significant bodies of water susceptible to seiche or tsunami are located in the vicinity of the proposed Overlay areas.

General Plan Sections 8.5 (Water Resources) and 9.3 (Flood Hazards) address hydrological issues, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures to protect and preserve water resources, including from export and withdrawal, and provide adequate flood protection to minimize hazards and structural damage. Government Element Goal Gov-5 indicates that it is the County's policy is to protect the County's environment, citizens and economy from adverse effects caused by activities relating to the extraction and use of water resources and to seek mitigation of any existing or future adverse effects resulting from such activities. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential impacts and consumption of water and potable water for renewable wind and solar energy projects. Numerous BMPs, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures are available to address potential impacts, including those described in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: provide preliminary site grading plans and drainage, erosion, and sediment control plans with applications to applicable lead agencies and to appropriate local jurisdictions; evaluate flood zoning and determine whether the site is located within a Flood Hazard Zone and/or the development would result in flood plain modifications; design facility areas consistent with local standards and standard engineering design practices; identify site surface water runoff patterns and develop mitigation measures to prevent excessive and unnatural soil deposition and erosion, in construction areas, and in areas downslope; direct runoff from parking lots, roofs, or other impervious surfaces to the immediate landscape or retention basins; maintain natural drainages and pre-project hydrographs for the area; conduct regular inspections of permanent erosion control measures to ensure long-term effectiveness; limit the discharge of blowdown and waste waters from cooling facilities so as to maintain existing water quality and aquatic environment; promote all feasible means of energy and water conservation and all feasible uses of alternative energy and water supply sources; utilize zero-liquid discharge technologies unless such technologies are shown to be environmentally undesirable or economically unsound, and; use of dry cooling technologies for power plant cooling is encouraged and preferred.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding hydrological resources. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

X. LAND USE AND PLANNING: Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

***Discussion**: The GPA will not directly divide any community. Several communities are located within the proposed Overlay areas, and, although not expected, specific wind or solar renewable energy projects indirectly could potentially divide these communities. Site-specific studies will evaluate potential impacts, including the potential to divide communities. If such issues are identified, mitigation measures and alternatives will be explored to minimize any impacts to the communities, such as project redesign and corridors to link the divided components of the community.*

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

The project updates the General Plan to reflect current policies to develop renewable wind and solar energy and provide for such development in a logical and orderly manner. The project is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant County codes. The proposed GPA is expected to compliment the DRECP, which is currently being formulated, and renewable wind and solar energy development will be required to be consistent with the DRECP, the West Mojave Plan, any plan developed for the Owens Lakebed, or other applicable habitat conservation or natural community conservation plans. Coordination with the military will ensure appropriate compatibility with military operations and readiness. Impacts overall are anticipated to be beneficial.

XI. MINERAL RESOURCES: Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: According to the General Plan Background Report, Inyo County contains a wealth of mineral resources. Mining activities include extraction of aggregate resources (such as stone, sand and gravel, and clays), tungsten, silver, copper, gold, borates, and soda ash. Development of wind and solar energy production facilities may restrict access to mineral resources, although in many cases it is expected that access to the resources can be maintained.*

General Plan Section 8.4 (Mineral and Energy Resources) address mineral resources, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures to protect the current and future extraction of mineral resources that are important to the County's economy. Goal Gov-9 includes policies to maintain mining opportunities on State and federal lands, requires the maintenance or expansion of access, discourages incompatible developments on lands identified as containing significant mineral resources, and support uses that will not preclude future mining activities. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential impacts.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding mineral resources. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XII. NOISE: Would the project result in the:

a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan	☐	☐	☒	☐

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐

***Discussion**: The noise environment in the County is predominantly rural in nature. Major human-induced noise sources include activity and mechanical noise in developed areas, traffic, aircraft, and military activities.*

The proposed GPA will not directly result in noise or vibration. Indirectly, development of renewable wind and solar energy will result in short-term construction and long-term operational noise and vibration. Construction noise and vibration may be intermittently intense in close proximity to the sources, but will cease upon completion of the construction activities. Long-term operational noise and vibration is expected to vary based on the specific technologies employed. Wind energy technology as it currently exists can produce increased noise during operations. This potential indirect increase in noise and vibration is potentially significant. Due to the low levels of flight activities at local airports and airstrips in the proximity to the proposed Overlay areas, limited exposure to aircraft noise is expected, and little if any increase or change in aircraft operations that might result in significant impacts on the noise environment is expected due to renewable wind and solar energy development.

General Plan Section 9.7 (Noise) addresses noise issues, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to protect sensitive land uses from exposure to excessive noise and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses. General Plan Table 9-9 specifies maximum allowable ambient noise exposure by land use. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential impacts. Numerous BMPs, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures are available to reduce potential noise impacts, including those described in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: consider locating facilities more than 0.5 mile from sensitive noise receptors, including quiet recreation, churches, medical care facilities, schools, child care facilities, parks, and residences; prepare a noise monitoring and mitigation plan; limit noisy construction activities (including truck and rail deliveries, pile driving, and blasting) to the least noise-sensitive times of day (such as weekdays between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.) for projects near residential or recreational areas; ensure project equipment has the appropriate sound-control devices and shield impact tools; contain project facilities within buildings or other types of effective noise enclosures; employ engineering controls, including sound-insulated equipment and control rooms, to reduce the average noise level to appropriate levels in normal work areas, and; use variable speed turbines or pitched blades to lower rotational speed.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding noise and vibration. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XIII. POPULATION AND HOUSING -- Would the project:

a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☒	☐	☐

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

***Discussion**: Inyo County is predominantly rural, with limited population centers, mostly located in the Owens Valley. According to the Housing Element, unincorporated Inyo County contains a variety of housing types, including 4,689 detached single-family residences, 137 attached single-family residences, 2,267 mobile homes, and 290 multi-family units. The Department of Finance estimated that the County population in 2008 was 18,152.*

The proposed GPA will not directly impact population or housing. Indirectly, development of renewable wind and solar energy may result in increased demand for housing, potentially inducing population growth and displacing existing households. Due to the relatively small population and housing stock in the County, this impact could be substantial.

The Housing Element incorporates a variety of goals and policies to provide for adequate housing, including continuing to identify and evaluate the best approaches to providing a variety of residential development opportunities in the County. The proposed GPA works to further minimize potential impacts. As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding population and housing. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Development of new housing will be subject to review and site-specific studies to minimize potential impacts. Potential mitigation measures are discussed throughout this Initial Study. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES: Would the project:

a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Police protection?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Schools?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Parks?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Other public facilities?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: Numerous public service providers are located throughout the County, including fire protection districts, the Inyo County Sherriff, school districts, parks and libraries operated by the County, and community services districts. The proposed GPA will not directly impact such services. Indirectly however, development of renewable wind and solar energy resources will result in increased demands on service providers, both during construction and operation. Induced population growth may also require construction of new public facilities and infrastructure to support the new population. Due to the relatively limited capacity of these providers, this increased demand may result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause potentially significant environmental impacts.*

General Plan Section 4.3 (Public Utilities and Services) addresses public services, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure the timely development of public facilities and the maintenance of adequate service levels to meet the needs of existing and future County residents. As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding public services and facilities. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially

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significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Development of new facilities will be subject to review and site-specific studies to minimize potential impacts. Potential mitigation measures are discussed throughout this Initial Study. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XV. RECREATION: Would the project:

a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐

***Discussion**: Recreation is an important component of the County's economy and history, due to its natural resources. Recreational opportunities are provided throughout the County, and include Death Valley National Park, the Inyo National Forest, public lands, and developed recreational areas. The proposed GPA will not directly impact recreational resources. Indirectly, population growth induced by renewable wind and solar energy development might result in physical deterioration of resources or the need for new facilities. Renewable wind and solar energy development may also directly block access to recreation opportunities.*

General Plan Section 8.9 (Recreation) addresses recreational resources, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to provide adequate space and facilities to meet the needs of County residents and visitors. Government Element Goal Gov-7 indicates that the County supports and encourages varied use of public and private recreational opportunities. The proposed GPA includes language to minimize impacts to recreational access from renewable wind and solar energy development.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding recreation. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Development of new facilities will be subject to review and site-specific studies to minimize potential impacts. Potential mitigation measures are discussed throughout this Initial Study. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XVI. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC -- Would the project:

a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature	☐	☒	☐	☐

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(e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☒	☐	☐
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	☐	☐	☒	☐
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

***Discussion**: The County's transportation system is dispersed and limited due to its rural nature. Major highways include US Highway 395 north-to-south through the Owens Valley along the County's western side, State Route 127 north-to-south through the southeastern corner of the County, State Route 190 that runs east-to-west through the County between the Owens Valley and Death Valley Junction, and State Route 168 that runs between Lake Sabrina west of Bishop and then through the Inyo mountains to Nevada. Other lesser State highways, County roads, local streets, and paved and unpaved roads through Death Valley National Park, the Inyo National Forest, BLM lands, and DWP lands provide access. Transit is provided in western Inyo County by the Eastern Sierra Transit Agency. Air traffic through the County includes small commercial and personal aircraft traveling locally, larger commercial aircraft overflying the County, and military operations.*

The GPA will not directly impact transportation facilities. Indirectly, construction and operation of renewable wind and solar energy projects has the potential to affect transportation resources. Construction traffic may be substantial with respect to capacity, and may degrade facilities. Road improvements may result in safety hazards. Air traffic may be affected by wind towers, light and glare, and radar interference. Due to the dispersed nature of the County and limited bicycle and transit options, little or no impacts regarding parking or alternative transportation are expected.

The General Plan Circulation Element addresses vehicular traffic, roadways and highways, aviation, railroads, public transportation, trails, and bicycles, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures towards a transportation system that is safe, efficient, and comfortable. Additionally, the proposed GPA works to minimize potential impacts on military readiness. Numerous BMPs, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures are available to address potential transportation and circulation impacts, such as those identified in the Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. These include, but are not limited to, the following: consult with the FAA regarding the heights of the project structures and avoid conflicts with aviation; consult with representatives from the appropriate military installation for projects to be located under low-level military airspace; design the project to address military concerns; prepare a transportation plan for implementation during all phases of the project; obtain encroachment permits from appropriate agencies, and; repair or reconstruct to pre-project conditions project-related access roads that are damaged by project construction.

As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential indirect impacts regarding traffic and transportation. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XVII. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS --
Would the project:

a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☒	☐	☐

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c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☒	☐	☐
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion: *Numerous utility providers are located throughout the County, including community services districts, water companies, and the County itself. The proposed GPA will not directly impact these utility providers. Indirectly however, development of renewable wind and solar energy resources may result in increased demands for utilities and infrastructure, both during construction and operation. New transmission and interties may be necessary to transport the renewable energy to market. Increased disposal rates at County landfills and compliance with construction debris recycling requirements may be applicable during construction. New stormwater drainage facilities may be needed to accommodate renewable wind and solar energy development. Induced population growth may also require construction of new utilities and infrastructure to support the new population. Due to the relatively limited capacity of utility providers in the County, this increased demand may result in the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause potentially significant environmental impacts.*

General Plan Section 4.3 (Public Utilities and Services) addresses utilities, and provide goals, policies, and implementation measures to ensure the timely development of utilities and the maintenance of adequate service levels to meet the needs of existing and future County residents. As required by existing policies and regulations and the proposed GPA, site-specific studies will be required to address and mitigate potential impacts regarding utilities. As discussed in Section IX, these studies will include water supplies. Mitigation measures based on these site-specific studies are anticipated to reduce any potentially significant indirect impacts that may be identified to less than significant levels. Development of new utilities and infrastructure will be subject to review and site-specific studies to minimize potential impacts. Potential mitigation measures are discussed throughout this Initial Study. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.

XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively	☐	☒	☐	☐

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considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?				
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Discussion*: The proposed GPA works to enhance and protect the quality of the County's environment, and will not result in direct impacts on the physical environment. Development of individual projects may have the potential to result in significant indirect impacts. As discussed throughout this Initial Study, the Inyo County General Plan addresses potential issues, and identifies goals, policies, and implementation measures to minimize those impacts. The proposed GPA is intended to compliment the General Plan and other renewable energy planning efforts and address renewable wind and solar energy development comprehensively to avoid, minimize, and eliminate potential impacts. The proposed GPA requires that site-specific studies and appropriate environmental review be conducted to minimize environmental, social, and economic impacts. The Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects incorporates BMPs and guidance for renewable wind and solar energy projects, as do BLM's EISs prepared for wind, solar, and transmission. Overall, the extensive menu of mitigation measures developed through these multiple planning processes are anticipated to preclude significant impacts on the quality of the environment, substantial reductions in the habitat of any fish or wildlife species, any fish or wildlife population dropping below self-sustaining levels, threats to eliminate any plant or animal community, reductions in the number or restrictions in the range of any rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminations of important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. No significant direct or indirect project-specific or cumulative impacts on the environment or human beings are anticipated, provided that mitigation is developed based on site-specific studies and applied to projects to preclude impact. Compliance with BMPs, the Inyo County General Plan, the Renewable Energy Ordinance, and other relevant local, State, and federal rules, regulations, policies, and procedures will work to ensure less than significant impacts.*

Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact

References

Inyo County General Plan and Background Report. 2002 and 2003. Prepared by Jones and Stokes for Inyo County.

Draft Best Management Practices and Guidance Manual for Desert Renewable Energy Projects. Prepared by Renewable Energy Action Team. 2010.

Refer also to http://inyoplanning.org/RenewableNewPage.htm.