

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) has been prepared by the County of Riverside (County) for consideration of the Palo Verde Mesa Solar Project (proposed Project) proposed by Renewable Resources Group, Inc. (Applicant). The County of Riverside is the lead agency for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance in evaluation of the Applicant's Project, and has directed the preparation of this Final EIR. The County will use this Final EIR, in conjunction with other information developed in the County's formal record, when considering whether to certify the Final EIR, approve Conditional Use Permit No. 3684 or Public Use Permit No. 916 and related documents, and whether to enter into Development Agreement for the Project. Pursuant to CEQA requirements, the County will determine the adequacy of this Final EIR and, if determined adequate, the County will certify the document as complying with CEQA.

This Final EIR consists of the Draft EIR published in September 2016 together with the responses to comments provided in Chapter 2 and revisions to the Draft EIR provided in Chapter 3. The Draft EIR is contained on the CD affixed to the cover of printed copies of the Final EIR.¹

The Draft EIR detailed the Project; evaluated and described the potential environmental impacts associated with Project construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning; identified those impacts that could be significant; and presented mitigation measures that, if adopted by the County or other responsible agencies, could avoid or minimize these impacts. The Draft EIR also evaluated alternatives to the Project, including the Reduced Project Alternative and the CEQA-required No Project Alternative.

1.2 Project Overview

The Applicant proposes to construct, operate and maintain, and decommission an up to 450 megawatt (MW) alternating current solar photovoltaic (PV) electrical generating facility and associated infrastructure to provide site access on approximately 3,400 acres of land in unincorporated Riverside County, California. The solar facility is comprised of three sites that would be constructed in phases. Site 1 (Phase 1) would total 905 acres and would have a generation output of 145 MW; Site 2 (Phase 2) would total 1,343 acres and would have a generation output of 221 MW; and Site 3 (Phase 3) would total 1,002 acres and would have a

¹ A digital copy of this Final EIR is included on the same CD.

generation output of 104 MW. The power produced by the Project would be conveyed to the local power grid via interconnection to the Southern California Edison (SCE) Colorado River Substation (CRS), an approved new substation located south of Interstate 10 (I-10) and approximately seven miles west of the Project area. The Project has secured a California Independent System Operator (CAISO) interconnection queue position sufficient for the size of the Project. The Project would produce enough energy to power approximately 180,000 households and progress the goals of the California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) and other similar renewable programs in the state.

1.3 Organization of the Final EIR

As required by CEQA Guidelines §15132, this Final EIR consists of the following elements:

- (a) The Draft EIR;
- (b) Comments received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary;
- (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies that commented on the Draft EIR;
- (d) The responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and
- (e) Any other information added by the lead agency.

This Final EIR consists of four chapters and several appendices.

- **Chapter 1, *Introduction*.** This chapter is an introductory chapter that describes the purpose as well as the organization of the Final EIR, and provides a brief description of the Project.
- **Chapter 2, *Response to Comments*.** This chapter describes the organization of the comment letters and the coding system used to identify individual comments received on the Draft EIR. It includes a list of all agencies and organizations that submitted comments and provides copies of all letters received as well as responses to each comment.
- **Chapter 3, *Revisions to the Draft EIR*.** This chapter contains text changes to the Draft EIR that reflect additions, corrections, and clarifications resulting from the analysis conducted by the County in preparing responses to comments on the Draft EIR. These changes are incorporated as part of the Final EIR.
- **Chapter 4, *Recipients of the Final EIR*.** This chapter identifies all agencies, organizations, and individuals who are receiving a copy of the Final EIR.
- **Appendices.** The appendices provide supporting documentation pertinent to the Draft and Final EIR processes.