

## **APPENDIX B-2**

### **Original Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Comments**

**March 2013**

**[Superseded by Revised NOP of August 2017]  
[Contained in Appendix B-1]**

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## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Agencies  
Responsible Agencies  
Local and Public Agencies  
Interested Parties  
Trustee Agencies

From: Westlands Water District  
  
3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056  
Fresno, CA 93703-6056  
Contact: Kiti Buelna

Subject: 1) **Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)  
Pursuant to the Requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**  
2) **Notice of Scoping Meeting**

Westlands Water District (WWD or District) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, and location, and a discussion of the project's probable/potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, we ask that you respond at the earliest possible date, but *not later than thirty (30) days* after receipt of this notice, which date is anticipated to be April 15, 2013. Please submit your comments by 5:00 P.M. on April 15, 2013.

**A SCOPING MEETING IS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD AT WESTLANDS WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAMBERS, 3130 N. FRESNO STREET, FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, AT 3:00 to 5:00 P.M., ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2013. ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES, PARTIES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.**

Please send your response to **Kiti Buelna** at the address shown above. We will need the name of a contact person in your agency or organization.

**Project Title:** Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities

**Project Location:** Avenal Cutoff Road and Laurel Avenue, Kings County

**Project Proponents:** Westlands Water District and Westside Holdings LLC

Date: March 13, 2013

Signature: 

Jose Gutierrez

Title:

Deputy General Manager Resource

Reference: California Administrative Code, Title 24, Sections 15082(a), 15103, and 15375

## **1. Project Title**

### Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities

WSP Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities include:

*1. Westlands Solar Park (WSP) Generating Facilities* (see Figures 1 and 2)

Consisting of all or part of the following Sections:

Township 20S Range 18E – Sections 24, 25, 34, 35

Township 20S Range 19E – Sections 4-9, 14-23, 26-35

Township 21S Range 19E – Sections 3-10, 16, 20, 21, 29-31

Township 22S Range 19E – Section 6

*2. Henrietta to Gates Transmission Upgrades* – New 230-kV transmission line running parallel and adjacent to the existing Henrietta to Gates transmission corridor, between the WSP to the Gates Substation (see Figures 2 and 3)

*3. Westlands Transmission Corridor* – Upgrades to Central California Transmission Corridor from Gates Substation to Los Banos Substation (see Figure 3)

*4. Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor* – New transmission corridor connecting the Westlands Transmission Corridor from Helm Substation to Gregg Substation (See Figure 3)

## **2. Lead Agency Name and Address**

Westlands Water District  
3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056  
Fresno, CA 93703-6056

## **3. Contact Person and Phone Number**

Kiti Buelna  
(559) 241-6226

## **4. Project Location**

*WSP Generating Facilities* – The approximately 24,000-acre Westlands Solar Park (WSP) is located in west-central Kings County and is generally bounded by State Route 198 on the north, State Route 41 on the southeast, and the Fresno County line on the west (see Figures 1 and 2). The WSP plan area consists almost entirely of cultivated agricultural land. There are no dwellings or agricultural buildings within the plan area. County roads that traverse the plan area include Avenal Cutoff Road, Laurel Avenue, and Nevada Avenue. Two high voltage transmission corridors pass through the northwest corner of the plan area in a northeast-southwest direction. A natural gas transmission pipeline traverses the WSP in a northeast-southwest direction running parallel and east of Avenal Cutoff Road. A branch pipeline heads east along the south side of Laurel Avenue to Stratford.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – This would consist of a new 230-kV transmission line running parallel and adjacent to the existing 230-kV Henrietta-Gates transmission line, for a distance of approximately 11 miles between the WSP site and the Gates Substation (see Figure 2).

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – This transmission corridor would provide needed upgrades to the Central California Transmission Corridor (Path 15) in the segment between the Gates Substation and the Los Banos Substation, a distance of approximately 87 miles. The new transmission corridor

would diverge from the Path 15 alignment near the City of Huron and head north and northwest through the interior of Westlands Water District, and then head west alongside the existing Panoche-Helm transmission corridor to rejoin Path 15 about four miles south of the Pacheco Substation, beyond which the alignment would run adjacent to Path 15 to the Los Banos Substation (see Figure 3).

*Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor* – This corridor would branch off the planned Westlands Transmission Corridor at the Helm Substation near the City of San Joaquin and head northward across the San Joaquin River, and then eastward to the Gregg Substation located north of Fresno and east of State Route 99 (see Figure 3).

## **5. Lead Agency and Project Sponsor Names and Addresses**

### Lead Agency

Westlands Water District  
P.O. Box 6056  
3130 N. Fresno Street  
Fresno, CA 93703-6056

### And

### Project Sponsor

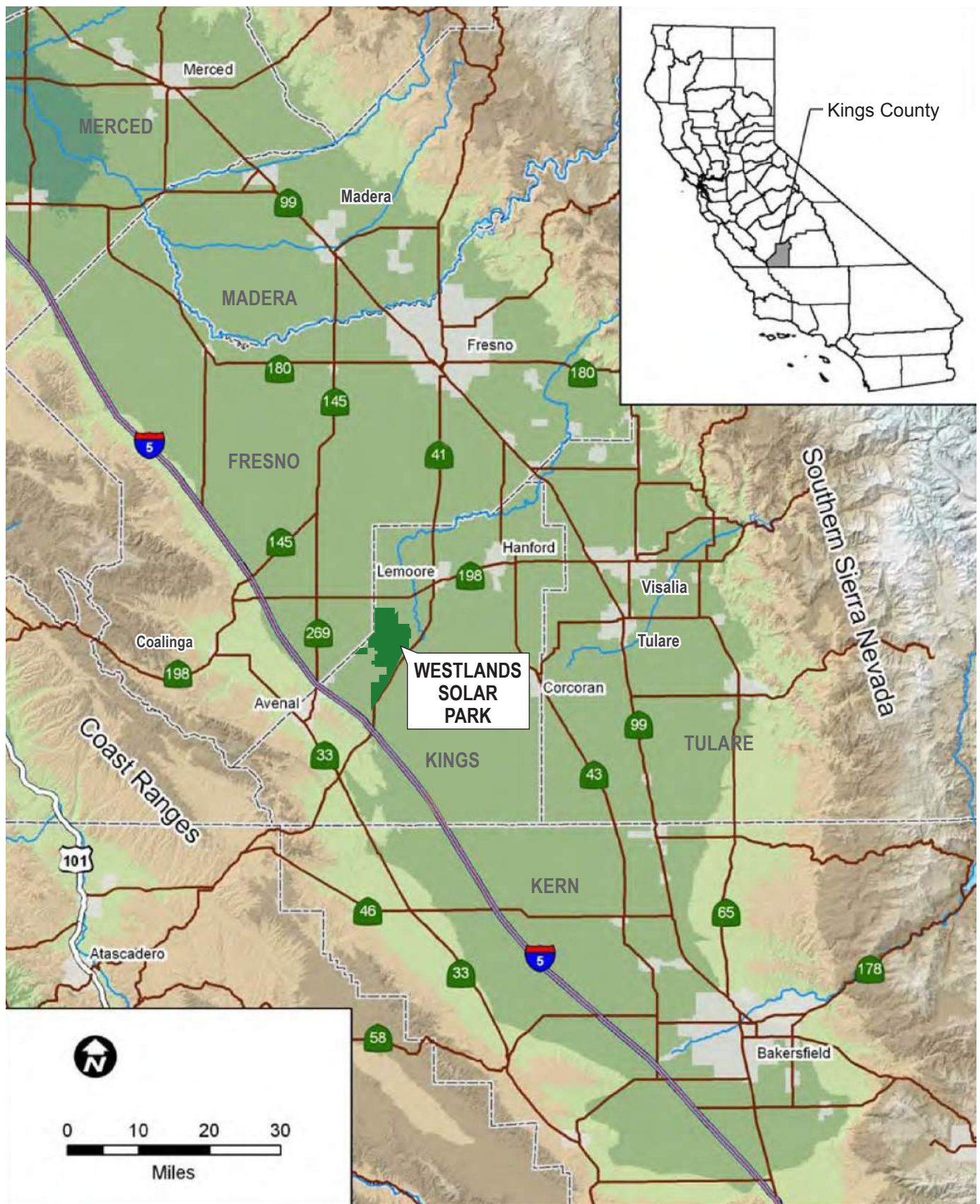
Westside Holdings LLC  
1005 N. Demaree  
Visalia, CA 93291-4101

## **6. General Plan**

The Kings County 2035 General Plan categorizes all of the lands within the WSP plan area as “Agriculture Open Space.” The Land Use Element of the General Plan designates the lands within the plan area as either “General Agriculture – 40 Acre (South County)” or “Exclusive Agriculture – 40 acre.” General Plan “Land Use Objective B7.1” states: “Allow compatible Open Space and Public uses of land within the Agriculture Open Space area of the County.” GP “Land Use Policy B7.1.2” provides: “Power generation facilities for commercial markets shall be allowed and regulated through the Conditional Use Permit approval process, and include thermal, wind, and solar photovoltaic electrical generating facilities that produce power.”

The WSP plan area consists entirely of unincorporated territory, and no portion of the plan area lies within the Primary or Secondary Sphere of Influence of an incorporated City or within a Community District.

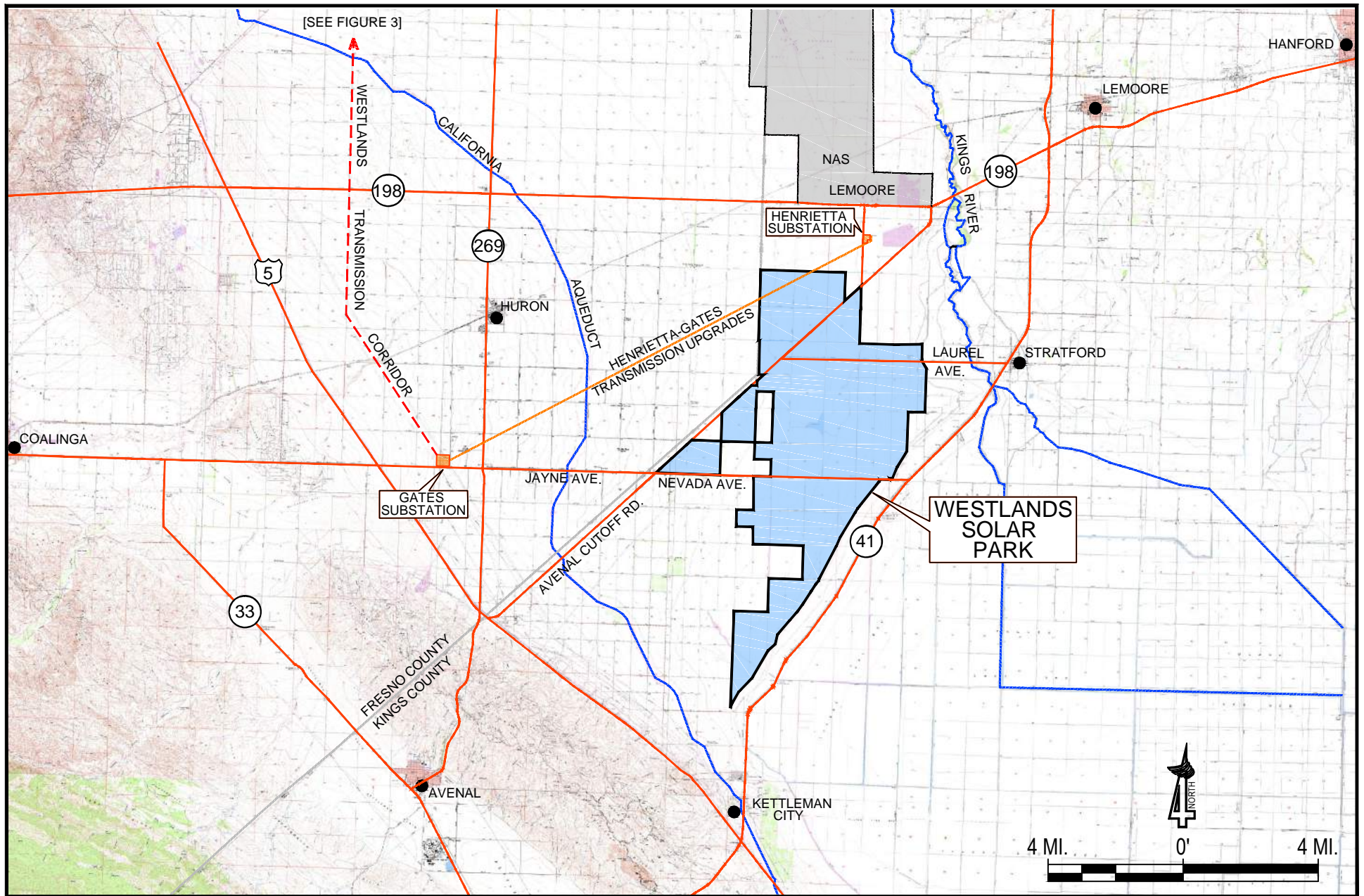
The Naval Air Station Lemoore is located to the north of the WSP plan area and the majority of the plan area lies within the Military Influence Area (MIA) of NAS Lemoore. The northern portion of the WSP plan area is subject to NAS Height Restriction Zones “D” and “G” where maximum allowable structure heights are 500 feet in each case. The County General Plan’s Exclusive Agriculture land use designation corresponds to lands subject to military aircraft noise levels of 70 dB CNEL or greater, and the applicable General Plan policy would limit or discourage land uses that would increase noise and safety risks to inhabitants. There are no other restrictions on WSP land use associated with NAS Lemoore.



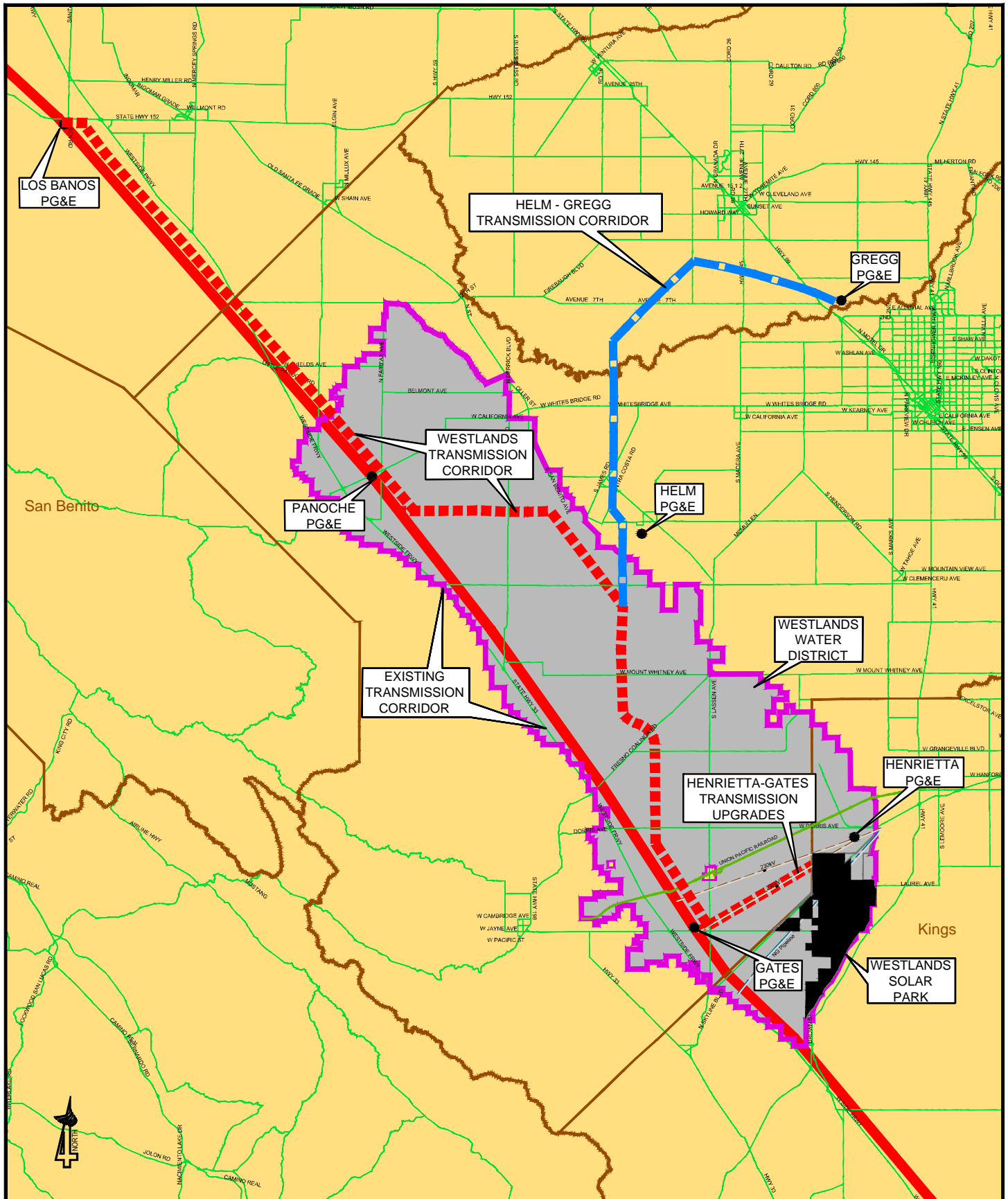
## REGIONAL CONTEXT

FIGURE 1





VICINITY MAP  
FIGURE 2



PLANNED TRANSMISSION CORRIDORS

FIGURE 3



## 7. Zoning

The majority of the WSP plan area is zoned “AG-40 (General Agriculture – 40 Acre Min.)” on the Zone Plan of Kings County, and the lands located north of Kansas Avenue are zoned “AX (Exclusive Agriculture).” Both zoning districts permit solar photovoltaic electrical generating facilities as a conditional use.

## 8. Description of Project

### *Overview*

The overall project consists of the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and three related transmission facilities, as follows: 1) Westlands Solar Park Generating Facilities; 2) Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades, connecting WSP and the Gates Substation; 3) Westlands Transmission Corridor, connecting Gates and Los Banos Substations; and 4) Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor, connecting Gates and Gregg Substations via the southern segment of the Westlands Transmission Corridor. These project elements, which are described in further detail below, will all receive program-level environmental review in the EIR.

### Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities

#### *Overall Goals*

The Westlands Solar Park Master Plan is intended to fulfill the following goals of the Project:

- 1) To provide a comprehensive and cohesive planning document to guide and facilitate the beneficial reuse of drainage-impaired lands through development of renewable energy generation in the Westlands Competitive Renewable Energy Zone (CREZ).
- 2) To establish the preferred transmission corridors routes through the District. Selection of these routes would provide renewable energy generation deliveries from drainage-impaired lands to the State electrical grid. The paths are aligned in a manner that best facilitates the economic development of the drainage-impaired lands for renewable energy generation; or stated conversely, to ensure that transmission planning decisions by others do not result in transmission routing that is unfavorable to drainage-impaired lands or becomes an impediment to renewable power generation.

#### *Project Objectives of the WSP Master Plan*

The major goals articulated above encompass the following specific objectives of the WSP Master Plan:

- Contribute to the solution of area-wide agricultural drainage problems by retiring the WSP site from irrigated agriculture.
- Provide for the economically viable and environmentally beneficial reuse of the site’s physically impaired agricultural soils.
- Facilitate the redirection of scarce surface water allocations from the WSP plan area to more productive agricultural land that is not physically impaired by saline soils, high groundwater, or selenium contamination.

- Provide utility-scale power generation on physically-impaired farmland in order to reduce pressure for renewable energy development on prime agricultural soils elsewhere.
- Provide a large utility-scale solar generation facility on highly disturbed lands which provide minimal habitat value for wildlife.
- Provide a low-impact alternative location for the siting of utility-scale renewable energy development that might otherwise occur on lands with high habitat value for protected wildlife species.
- Provide utility-scale solar generation in a location that is already traversed by high-voltage transmission lines.
- Help implement the State's goal of increased electrical generation with renewable resources under California's Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS).
- Help implement the California Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) by providing for the development of the solar resource within the Westlands CREZ. (It is noted that the Westlands CREZ received the highest state-wide environmental ranking among all CREZs designated through the RETI process.)
- Contribute to overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by generating electricity that is not based on the combustion of fossil fuel, pursuant to The California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32).
- Adopt and implement a Master Plan that avoids sensitive wildlife habitat, results in no significant biological impacts, and enhances the overall habitat quality of the WSP site.
- Create new employment opportunities for local residents.
- Positively contribute to the local economy through stimulation of economic activity such as creation of secondary multiplier employment and the purchase of materials and services.
- Provide community benefits through increased property tax and sales tax revenues.
- Adopt a Master Plan that is consistent with all applicable local planning designations, policies, and requirements, without the need for General Plan or Zoning amendments or special guidelines to accommodate solar development under the WSP Master Plan.

*Project Objectives of the Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades*

- Provide delivery of renewable solar power from WSP to the State electrical grid in a cost-effective manner while minimizing impacts to the environment and the agricultural community.

### *Project Objectives of the Westlands Transmission Corridor*

- Help provide reliability, flexibility, and stability to the State electrical grid by completing needed upgrades to the Gates to Los Banos segment of the Central California Transmission Corridor.
- Provide for electrical transmission through the areas of physically-impaired retired farmland in the interior eastern portions of the Westlands Water District in order to facilitate the productive reuse of these retired lands for renewable solar generation.
- Adopt a transmission route that achieves the primary objectives of this transmission facility in a manner that is cost-effective and results in the least impacts to the environment and the agricultural community.

### *Project Objectives of the Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor*

- Provide for increased capacity of transmission interconnection between the State electrical grid and the electrically-constrained Fresno area load center.
- Provide for delivery of renewable solar power from WSP to the Fresno load center.
- Help provide for delivery of renewable solar power from WSP to the Helms Pumped Storage Facility in order to maximize the capabilities of the Helms facility in integrating renewable energy into the State power supply through increased load balancing flexibility.
- Adopt a transmission route that achieves the primary objectives of this transmission facility in a manner that is cost-effective and results in the least impact to the environment and the agricultural community.

### *Role of WSP Master Plan and Transmission Corridor Planning in Westlands Water District Policy Scheme*

The WSP Master Plan is intended to serve as a further refinement of WWD's Land Use and Asset Management Plan. More specifically, the WSP Master Plan provides further definition of the policy directive contained in the Land Use and Asset Management Plan which identifies renewable energy development as a preferred form of development for the reuse of retired lands, particularly those lands located close to existing electrical substations. The planned transmission corridors are intended to advance the implementation of the WSP Master Plan by providing the means for efficient interconnection of Westlands solar generation to the State electrical grid, the Helms Pumped Storage Facility, and the Fresno-area electrical market.

### *Detailed Project Description*

The Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and the related transmission corridors are further described below.

#### Westlands Solar Park Generating Facilities

The Westlands Solar Park consists of the development of approximately 24,000 acres in west-central Kings County for a utility-scale solar energy generation facility (see Figures 1 and 2). The solar generating facilities will consist solely of photovoltaic solar arrays and associated electrical

equipment and interconnections, along with support facilities, substations, and other utilities infrastructure. Approximately 2,400 Megawatts (MW) is the total estimated electrical generating capacity at buildout. (Note: The RETI process estimated up to 5,000 MW of solar generation for the Westlands CREZ.) The overall pacing of solar development is expected to proceed at an average rate of 2,000 acres (or 200 MW) per year over 12 years. The WSP generating facilities would receive program-level review in the EIR.

#### Upgrades to Existing Henrietta to Gates Transmission Corridor

The full buildout of WSP solar development will require transmission upgrades to convey the generated power to the Gates Substation. The planned upgrades would involve the construction of a new 230-kV transmission tower line running parallel to the existing Henrietta-Gates corridor, commencing from a new substation planned for construction inside the north WSP boundary, and running southwestward for a distance of about 11 miles to the Gates Substation on Jayne Avenue near I-5. The new transmission line may run along either the north or south side of the existing transmission corridor, and both alternatives would be analyzed in the EIR. The Henrietta-Gates transmission upgrades would receive program-level environmental review in the EIR.

#### Westlands Transmission Corridor

The full buildout of the WSP plan area would require the addition of transmission capacity to the existing 500-kV Central California Transmission Corridor along I-5. This would involve the construction of a 500-kV transmission line running generally parallel to the existing transmission corridor from the Gates Substation north for a distance of about 87 miles to the Los Banos Substation (see Figure 3). The planned alignment would head northwestward from the Gates Substation and would diverge from the Path 15 alignment near the City of Huron and then head north to the Helm Substation. It would then turn westward following the existing Helm-Panoche transmission corridor westward to rejoin the Central California Transmission Corridor approximately four miles south of the Panoche Substation. From this point northwestward the new transmission line would run adjacent to and east of the existing transmission line. The alignment of an approximately 40-mile segment of this new transmission corridor through the interior of Westlands and would provide interconnection for future renewable generation in the physically-impaired lands in the eastern portions of Westlands Water District. The Westlands Transmission Corridor would receive program-level environmental review in the EIR. An alternative to this interior alignment, consisting of a new parallel transmission line constructed alongside the existing Path 15 transmission corridor for the entire distance between the Gates and Los Banos substations, will be evaluated in the Project Alternatives chapter of the EIR. The Westlands Transmission Corridor would also provide a strategic junction (near Helm Substation) for extending a new transmission line (described below) to connect the Gates Substation to the Gregg Substation (north of Fresno), described below.

#### Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor

This new transmission corridor would branch off the planned Westlands Transmission Corridor at the Helm Substation near the City of San Joaquin and head northward across the San Joaquin River, and then eastward to the Gregg Substation located north of Fresno and east of State Route 99 (see Figure 3). This transmission corridor is intended to provide for the growing electrical demand in the Fresno area and would also facilitate the transmission of adequate power to the upstream Helms Pumping Plant in order to allow the utilization of the full potential of this facility for pumped storage. The Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor would receive program-level environmental review in the EIR.



## **Purpose of the EIR on the WSP Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities**

The purpose and function of the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan EIR is to provide program-level CEQA review and clearance for the following actions by the Westlands Water District Board of Directors:

- Adoption of the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan as the policy and planning framework for incremental development of solar PV generating facilities within WSP.
- Adoption of the Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades for delivery of WSP renewable solar generation to the State electrical grid at the Gates Substation.
- Adoption of the Westlands Transmission Corridor as the preferred transmission route for upgrading the Central California Transmission Corridor between the Gates and Los Banos Substations.
- Adoption of the Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor as the preferred transmission route for increasing the capacity of the interconnection between the Central California Transmission Corridor and the Fresno load center at the Gregg Substation, and for increasing the load balancing capacity of the Helms Pumped Storage Facility.

## **9. Surrounding Land Uses and Setting**

*WSP Plan Area* – The lands of the WSP plan area and surrounding areas consist almost entirely of cultivated agricultural land. The WSP site includes no residential or non-residential structures. The Shannon Ranch complex is located just off-site to the west at the intersection of Avenal Cutoff Road and Gale Avenue. The ranch complex consists of 20 single-family units of worker housing, a ranch office, a machine shop, various other outbuildings and infrastructure facilities, and an airstrip. The remaining lands surrounding the WSP site are sparsely settled. Apart from the Shannon Ranch described above, there are a total of 6 dwellings located within one mile of the project boundary, 2 of which are located within one-half mile.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned transmission upgrades corridor traverses lands in active agricultural cultivation. No portion of the transmission corridor passes over or near residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities such as dairies. The corridor would pass over the California Aqueduct and State Route 269 at locations adjacent to or in proximity to existing transmission line crossings.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – The valley-floor segments of the transmission corridor pass through cultivated agricultural lands and retired farmlands within the Westlands Water District. North of the Fresno-Merced County line, the transmission corridor traverses chaparral covered foothills en route to the Los Banos Substation. No portion of the transmission corridor passes over or near residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities such as dairies. The corridor passes over several state highways, including I-5, would cross the California Aqueduct in two places. The transmission corridor does not pass over or near any wildlife refuges or other public lands.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – This transmission corridor passes through cultivated agricultural lands in Fresno and Madera Counties. The corridor passes between the communities of San Joaquin and Tranquillity, and then passes between the Mendota and Kerman wildlife areas before crossing San Joaquin River into Madera County. In southern Madera County, the corridor stays to the west and north of the rural residential development concentrated north of the river. The corridor

crosses over several state highways, including SR-180, SR-145, and SR-99. No portion of the transmission corridor passes over or near residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities.

## **10. Other Approvals Required from Public Agencies**

No approvals from other agencies are required for adoption of the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan or the adoption of the transmission corridors. The solar generating projects and transmission projects that will be subsequently brought forward pursuant the WSP Master Plan and the adopted transmission alignments will require the following actions and approvals from other public agencies, including but not limited to those described below:

- 1) Kings County – Approval of Conditional Use Permits, Grading Plans, Building Permits, Vesting Tentative Parcel Maps or Lot Line Adjustments, Septic System Permits for solar generating facilities; encroachment permits for work within County road rights-of-way.
- 2) California Energy Commission (CEC) – Approval of Transmission Corridor Zone Designation for the Westlands Transmission Corridor and the Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor.
- 3) California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) – Approval of transmission projects and network upgrades, as required by law.
- 4) San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) – Administration of the Indirect Source Review (ISR) rule (Rule 9510) for mitigation of regional emissions; approval of dust control plans.
- 5) Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) – Administration of State stormwater quality requirements, including review of Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs).
- 6) California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) – Encroachment permits for transmission line crossings at I-5, SR-269, SR-33, SR-198, SR-145, SR-180, and SR-99; permits for oversized loads.
- 7) California Department of Water Resources (DWR) – Encroachment permits for transmission line crossings over the California Aqueduct.
- 8) California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) – Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement/Permit (LSAA) for Helm-Gregg transmission line crossing over the San Joaquin River.

## 11. Summary of Probable Environmental Effects

The EIR will address all checklist items contained in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The following is a discussion of the main environmental topics to be covered in the EIR. Those checklist items that are determined to have negligible or no impact associated with them will be briefly discussed in an EIR chapter entitled “Effects Found Not To Be Significant” as provided under Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines, and are not discussed below.

### Aesthetics

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP plan area is flat, featureless, and absent of scenic resources. The mountains and foothills of the Coast Ranges are visible on the horizon in distant views to the west. There are no rock outcroppings or historic buildings or important trees on the WSP plan area or adjacent lands. There are no designated State scenic highways in the WSP vicinity and no highways in the area been determined to be eligible for such designation at the County or state level.

The solar arrays installed within the WSP generating facilities would be low in profile, reaching a maximum height of 8 to 10 feet above the ground surface at maximum angle of tilt. Taller support buildings and structures would be dispersed throughout the generating facility. These would include: transformer/inverter enclosures which would be 12 to 15 feet high, operations and maintenance buildings which would be 20 to 30 feet high; above-ground power collection lines with pole heights ranging from 35 to 125 feet. The WSP generating facilities would include about 6 electrical substations which would include elements as tall as 125 feet.

Facility lighting would be largely confined to security lighting for operations and maintenance facilities, construction staging areas, and substations. The solar arrays themselves would not be lighted. The photovoltaic solar panels would be composed of dark non-reflective materials which would minimize the potential for glint and glare.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned upgraded transmission corridor connecting WSP to the Gates Substation would pass through agricultural lands with very few residential buildings. The planned transmission alignment would run parallel to the existing 230-kV transmission line and thus would not introduce a new linear structural element to the visual setting.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – The 40-mile transmission segment running through the interior of the Westlands Water District would introduce a new linear structural element to the visual setting but would avoid rural communities and residences. The southern and northwestern segments of the transmission corridor, totaling approximately 47 miles, would run parallel to the existing transmission corridor and would not introduce a new element to the visual setting along those segments.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – South of the San Joaquin River, the new corridor would pass through sparsely settled farmland and would avoid existing communities and residences. The river crossing would be by a single span with transmission towers located outside the river banks on either side. North and east of the river, the corridor would pass through areas of mixed agriculture and rural residential, but would avoid encroachment upon existing residences.

The EIR will include detailed analyses of the potential visual impacts and the potential lighting and glare impacts associated with the WSP solar generating facilities and the transmission corridors.

## Agricultural Resources

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – Almost all of the lands within WSP plan area are currently in cultivation for various crops. All of the lands within the WSP plan area are formally recognized as “drainage impaired” by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The accumulation of naturally-occurring salts combined with high-groundwater conditions has created severe limitations on agricultural land capability. Due to lack of agricultural drainage facilities, these near-surface soil conditions limit crop choices to salt-tolerant and lower value crops. The lower levels of crop revenue combined with the higher costs associated with managing these impaired lands substantially reduces their agricultural viability relative to non-impaired lands to the west. The Westlands Water District has identified these drainage-impaired lands for retirement from irrigated agriculture. Once retired, these lands would no longer be eligible to receive surface water deliveries from the San Luis Unit of the Central Valley Project (CVP). As non-irrigated lands, all of the soils within the Westlands Solar Park are classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as having a Land Capability rating of VII, indicating non-prime agricultural soils.

Much of the land within the WSP plan area is subject to Williamson Act Land Conservation contracts or Farmland Security Zone contracts. Under the Williamson Act amendments contained in SB 618 (Wolk), signed into law in October 2011, the drainage-impaired lands comprising the WSP site would be eligible for conversion to Solar Access Easements.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned upgraded transmission corridor passes through predominantly prime farmlands. The transmission towers would require small amounts of farmland for their footings, and the towers would be spaced about 800 feet apart. Agricultural cultivation would continue beneath the overhead transmission lines although there would be some restrictions on agricultural activities such as aerial spraying in proximity to the lines and towers.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – The interior segment of this transmission corridor would pass mainly through non-prime and retired farmland up to the point where it would rejoin the existing transmission corridor near the Panoche Substation. From the vicinity of the Panoche Substation to the Fresno/Merced County Line, the corridor passes through predominantly prime farmlands. North of the Fresno/Merced County Line the transmission corridor crosses to the foothills on the west side of I-5, which are predominantly covered with non-cultivated chaparral along the route to the Los Banos Substation. Where the transmission corridor traverses prime farmland, the transmission towers would require small amounts of farmland for their footings, and the towers would be spaced about 800 feet apart. Agricultural cultivation would continue beneath the overhead transmission lines although there would be some restrictions on agricultural activities such as aerial spraying in proximity to the lines and towers.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – Along its entire length through Fresno and Madera counties, this transmission corridor passes through predominantly non-prime farmland. As with the Westlands Transmission Corridor, the transmission towers would require small amounts of farmland for their footings, and the towers would be spaced about 800 feet apart. Agricultural cultivation would continue beneath the overhead transmission lines although there would be some restrictions on agricultural activities such as aerial spraying in proximity to the lines and towers.

The EIR will evaluate all potential impacts to agricultural resources associated with the WSP solar generating facilities and the new transmission corridors.



## Air Quality

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The air quality analysis would evaluate the air emissions associated with construction and operation. During their construction phases, the WSP generating facilities would result in short-term emissions of particulate matter and equipment exhaust, as well as vehicle exhaust from delivery trucks and worker commute trips. Site grading and construction activities would also generate potential particulate emissions from windborne dust. During project operations, emissions would result in long-term emissions from project delivery and commute traffic, and from on-site maintenance activities.

*Transmission Corridors* – The air quality impacts associated with construction of the Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would occur primarily in the construction phase, when the potential for dust generation and emissions from vehicles and equipment would be greatest. Once completed, the periodic inspection and maintenance of the transmission lines are expected to result in very low emissions.

The short-term and long-term emissions resulting from construction of the WSP solar facilities, the gen-tie, and transmission corridors will be addressed in a technical air quality assessment prepared by a qualified air quality consultant. The project's potential impacts upon local and regional air quality will be evaluated in the EIR based on the methodologies and thresholds established by the SJVAPCD and the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

## Biological Resources

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP site was converted to agricultural use decades ago, and little or no native vegetation or trees remain. A portion of the existing irrigation canals and ditches within the WSP plan area provide some habitat value for local species and those features would be preserved and expressly avoided by the solar facility and infrastructure development under the Master Plan. Preliminary literature search and data base reviews indicate that no occurrence of State or Federally-listed threatened or endangered species has been recorded on the WSP site or its immediate vicinity. The riparian vegetation that has developed around the tailwater pond in the central area of WSP will be preserved under the WSP Master Plan and protected with buffer zones. The WSP plan area includes no known jurisdictional wetlands or other sensitive natural communities. Biological surveys conducted throughout the WSP site to date indicate that the WSP is absent of special-status species with the exception of western burrowing owl, a small number of whose burrows occur along irrigation ditches that will be preserved within the WSP plan area. While no sign of kit fox has been identified on or near the WSP plan area, the WSP solar facilities would be required to implement all U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service avoidance and protection measures for possible transient kit foxes, and all solar facilities would include permeable fencing to allow passage of transient kit foxes. All required preconstruction surveys and avoidance measures for protected species would be identified as program-level mitigation measures in the EIR, pursuant to agency protocols and requirements.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned upgraded transmission corridor passes through lands that have been entirely converted to agriculture. There are no known special-status species or sensitive communities that would be significantly affected by either alignment alternative. Program-level biological investigations would identify all species that are likely to be present in the vicinity of the alternative corridor alignments, and would identify survey protocols and program-level mitigations for avoidance of significant impacts to sensitive biological resources.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – The interior segment of the new transmission corridor passes through lands that have been entirely converted to agriculture. The northwestern segment parallel to I-5 runs along the base of Coast Ranges where the presence of several special-status species has been recorded. Program-level biological investigations would identify all species that are likely to be present in the vicinity of the corridor, and would identify survey protocols and program-level mitigations for avoidance of significant impacts to sensitive biological resources.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – The major portions of this transmission corridor pass through lands that have been entirely converted to agriculture. Areas that are expected to be biologically sensitive include the riparian corridors of Fresno Slough and the San Joaquin River, and the wildlife refuges located south of the river near Kerman and Mendota. The planned transmission corridor alignment avoids the wildlife refuges by several miles and would cross the San Joaquin River where the channel is relatively narrow and sparsely vegetated. The river crossing would be a single span with transmission towers located outside the river banks on either side, thus minimizing the potential for vegetation removal and habitat impact. Program-level biological investigations would identify all species that are likely to be present in the vicinity of the new corridor, and would identify survey protocols and program-level mitigations for avoidance of significant impacts to sensitive biological resources.

### Cultural Resources

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – Cultural resources investigations conducted to date have included research of the relevant literature, review of clearinghouse databases, and site reconnaissance by qualified archaeologists and paleontologists. With respect to historic resources, the preliminary finding is that the potential for significant historic resources to be present is small given the general absence of buildings and structures within the WSP plan area. With respect to archaeological resources, there is a low probability that prehistoric archaeological sites are present due to the general absence of water and food resources that would have made the WSP plan area attractive for settlement or periodic use by native peoples. Due to the high level of ground disturbance from agricultural activities, there is also a very low likelihood that intact archaeological sites are present near the ground surface. With respect to paleontological resources, the preliminary finding of the paleontological research and site reconnaissance is that there is a low probability that fossils are present near the ground surface, but there is greater potential that paleontological resources occur in Pleistocene-age materials that underlie the surface alluvium of the WSP plan area at depth.

The cultural resources investigation for the EIR will include a program-level review and assessment of archaeological, historic, and paleontological resources within the WSP plan area, with management recommendations for mitigating any potential significant impacts to cultural resources.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – Conditions along the planned upgraded transmission corridor are similar to those within the WSP plan area, in that the affected lands consist of highly disturbed agricultural fields which are generally absent of buildings and structures. As such, the potential for historic, prehistoric archaeological, and paleontological resources to be present near the ground surface is considered very low. The cultural resources assessment for this corridor will provide program-level review and analysis, along with management recommendations for mitigating any potential significant impacts to cultural resources.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – Conditions within the valley-floor segments of this transmission corridor are similar to those within the WSP plan area and the Henrietta-Gates transmission upgrade corridor, in that the affected lands consist of highly disturbed agricultural fields which are generally absent of buildings and structures. Conditions change at Fresno-Merced County line, beyond which the transmission alignment traverses chaparral covered foothills en route to the Los Banos Substation.

This segment is considered to have moderate sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological resources and low sensitivity for paleontological resources. The cultural resources assessment for this transmission corridor will provide program-level review and analysis, along with management recommendations for mitigating any potential significant impacts to cultural resources.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – Conditions throughout this transmission corridor are generally similar to those within the WSP plan area and the Henrietta-Gates transmission corridor, in that the affected lands mainly consist of highly disturbed agricultural fields which are generally absent of buildings and structures. The corridor segment at the San Joaquin River crossing is considered to have moderate to high sensitivity for prehistoric archaeological resources. In addition, the area in the vicinity of Tranquillity has high sensitivity for paleontological resources based on the significant Pleistocene fossil deposits found in that area. The cultural resources assessment for the transmission corridor will provide program-level review and analysis, along with management recommendations for mitigating any potential significant impacts to cultural resources.

### Geology and Soils

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone, and thus the possibility of ground surface rupture at the site is remote. The WSP generating facilities would be subject to ground shaking from an earthquake centered on the Great Valley Fault Zone or the San Andreas Fault Zone, both located in the Coast Ranges to the west of the site. The potential for these and other seismic hazards, such as liquefaction or seismically-induced settlement, to significantly affect solar facilities within WSP will be evaluated by a qualified engineering geologist. The soils of the site will also be evaluated for potential impacts to structures and foundations, such as soils expansion and ground subsidence. The EIR will address all potential geologic and soils conditions and hazards that could adversely affect the WSP solar development, and identify programmatic mitigation measures to minimize risks associated with any such hazards on the site.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The geologic, soils, and seismic conditions within the planned upgraded transmission corridor are expected to be similar to those within the WSP site. Ground shaking potential increases to the west as the alignment approaches the major fault zones in the foothills to the west. Similarly, liquefaction potential is expected to be relatively greater within this corridor, compared to the WSP site, due to the presence of looser alluvial soils on lands traversed by the corridor. The relatively lower clay content of the soils within this corridor indicates that soils expansion would be of less concern than within the WSP plan area. The EIR will address all potential geologic and soils conditions and hazards that could adversely affect this corridor, and identify program-level mitigation measures to minimize risks associated with any such hazards.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – The geologic and soils conditions within the valley-floor segments of this transmission corridor are similar to those within the WSP plan area and the Henrietta-Gates transmission upgrade corridor. Conditions change at Fresno-Merced County line, beyond which the transmission alignment traverses chaparral-covered foothills en route to the Los Banos Substation. Relative to the valley floor, this segment would be more vulnerable to ground shaking from nearby fault zones, but less vulnerable to liquefaction or soils expansion. Landsliding potential is moderate in the foothill segment due to the presence of loose soils and sloping terrain. The EIR will address all potential geologic and soils conditions and hazards that could adversely affect the Westlands Transmission Corridor, and identify program-level mitigation measures to minimize risks associated with any such hazards.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – The geologic and soils conditions within this transmission corridor are similar to those within the WSP plan area and the Henrietta-Gates transmission corridor.

The ground shaking potential would be generally be lower than at the above facilities due to greater distance from the main causative faults. Potential for liquefaction is generally low except where the corridor crosses Fresno Slough south of Tranquillity. The potential hazard from unstable slopes and erodible soils is generally low with the possible exception of the San Joaquin River crossing. The EIR will address all potential geologic and soils conditions and hazards that could adversely affect the Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor, and identify program-level mitigation measures to minimize risks associated with any such hazards.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

As required under CEQA, the EIR will address the potential for the WSP generating facilities and related transmission corridors to generate greenhouse gas emissions. The climate change impacts associated with the construction of the solar facilities and transmission lines will be evaluated in terms of the criteria established by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. While some greenhouse gas emissions would be generated during construction and operation of the facilities, it is expected that the analysis will show that these emissions will be more than offset by the reduction in demand for fossil-fuel generated electricity provided by the development of renewable energy at the Westlands Solar Park.

### Hazards and Hazardous Materials

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The past and current agricultural operations within the WSP plan area involved the storage and use of fuels, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, and also included exploratory and production drilling for petroleum. Program-level environmental site investigations will be undertaken in conjunction with the EIR in order to determine the potential presence of residual agricultural chemicals or other hazardous materials within the WSP site. This will consist of a data base search to determine if the WSP plan area or adjacent lands are listed on any regulatory databases of recorded hazardous materials sites. A program-level analysis will discuss potential impacts and identify programmatic mitigations. The EIR will identify further investigations to be conducted, as appropriate, at such time as project-specific environmental review for WSP solar generating facilities is undertaken.

The construction and operation of the WSP solar facilities would involve the use of various fuels and materials which are classified as hazardous materials. For example, transformers would contain mineral oil which would require secondary containment. The EIR will address the potential use of hazardous materials and discuss the hazardous materials management plans and response plans to be implemented in case of accidental spill or unauthorized release of hazardous materials. The EIR will also discuss the potential for solar panel constituents to pose a health and safety hazards, and the potential for panel glare to result in hazards to aviation or driving.

*Transmission Corridors* – The Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors will be subject to program-level evaluation which will consist of a data base search to determine if the transmission corridors or adjacent lands are listed on any regulatory databases of recorded hazardous materials sites. A program-level analysis will discuss potential impacts and identify programmatic mitigations to address any existing hazards as well as potential hazards during operation and maintenance. The EIR will identify further investigations to be conducted, as appropriate, at such time as construction-level environmental review for the transmission corridors is undertaken. The EIR will also discuss the potential hazards from electromagnetic fields (EMF) associated with high voltage transmission lines.



## Hydrology and Water Quality

The primary hydrology and water quality issues to be addressed in the EIR include flooding, drainage and surface water quality, as discussed below. Potential impacts related to water supply and groundwater are addressed subsequently under “Utilities and Service Systems.”

### *Flooding and Drainage*

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – There are no FEMA-designated floodplains or floodways on or immediately adjacent to the WSP plan area. There are small low-lying areas at the southern and eastern ends of the WSP plan area that are not FEMA-designated floodplains but are identified in the “Awareness Floodplain Mapping” by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) as being subject to minor flooding, although the flood hazard is unspecified and no regulatory requirements apply to these areas. Therefore, the potential for solar facilities to be subject to flooding impacts or to impede flood flows would be negligible. The WSP solar developments would result in a very small increase the volume and rate of stormwater flows generated at the site. Although the site would be largely covered by solar arrays mounted on steel posts, rainfall would drain off the tilted panels to the permeable ground below. The existing site terrain would undergo very little modification, and the solar development would add a very small percentage of impervious surfaces to the site. New impervious surfaces would be confined to foundations and pavements added by transformer/inverter enclosures, operations and maintenance facilities, substations, and all-weather maintenance roadways. The total increase in impervious surface coverage is estimated to be approximately 3 percent, which would result in little or no change to off-site runoff or contribution to downstream flood flows. The EIR will include a full evaluation of potential flooding and drainage impacts associated with the solar development, and identify program-level mitigations as appropriate.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned upgraded transmission corridor traverses small areas of floodplain associated with drainage courses and low-lying areas. While narrow floodplain corridors can be spanned by power lines and avoided by transmission towers, it is possible (but unlikely) that some tower footings would need be placed in the 100-year floodplain in any areas where the area subject to flooding is large and cannot be entirely spanned. However, the footprints of the tower footings would be small and would not be expected to obstruct or redirect flood flows or increase the potential for downstream flooding. The potential flooding impacts associated with the Henrietta-Gates transmission corridor would be evaluated in the EIR, with any potentially significant impacts identified along with programmatic mitigation measures.

*Westlands and Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridors* – Both transmission corridors traverse floodplains associated with drainage courses and low-lying areas along their alignments. It is possible, but unlikely, that some transmission tower footings would need to be placed in the 100-year floodplain where the area subject to flooding is large and cannot be entirely spanned. However, any such tower footprints would be relatively small and would not be expected to obstruct or redirect flood flows or increase the potential for downstream flooding. The planned San Joaquin River crossing for the Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor is at a relatively narrow section of floodplain and can be spanned without placing towers in the floodplain or river channel. The potential flooding impacts associated with the transmission corridors would be evaluated in the EIR, with any potentially significant impacts identified along with corresponding program-level mitigation measures.

## *Surface Water Quality*

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – During grading and construction for WSP solar facilities, stormwater runoff would have the potential to erode exposed soils. During project operations, stormwater runoff would have the potential to carry pollutants from impervious surfaces to downstream water bodies. Due to the relatively level terrain of the WSP plan area and the absence of natural drainage courses, it is expected that surface water pollution could be readily mitigated through standard erosion and sediment controls during the construction phases, and through best management practices during the operational phases of solar development. The EIR will evaluate the potential impacts to surface water quality that could occur during the construction and operational phases of the project, and identify corresponding program-level mitigation measures.

*Transmission Corridors* – The Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would involve the construction of a series of transmission towers, the creation of maintenance access routes to those towers, and the establishment of sites for pulling and tensioning of the high voltage conductors. Grading and construction for the access roads and tower footings, and activities in the construction staging and laydown areas, would have the potential to result in soil erosion, sedimentation, and spills of hazardous materials. The potential for water quality impacts would be greater in areas with sloping terrain which would induce greater runoff rates than the relatively level terrain of the valley floor. Operations and maintenance activities would involve the potential use of hazardous materials. The potential water quality impacts associated with these activities will be addressed in the EIR along with program-level measures for preventing water quality impacts during construction and operation of the transmission lines.

## Land Use and Planning

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP plan area includes no existing residential or non-residential structures that would be displaced or affected by the solar generating facilities. The lands surrounding the WSP plan area consist almost entirely of cultivated agricultural land. The Shannon Ranch complex is located off-site to the west at the intersection of Avenal Cutoff Road and Gale Avenue. This ranch complex consists of 20 single-family units of worker housing, a ranch office, a machine shop, various other outbuildings and utilities infrastructure, and an airstrip. The remaining lands surrounding the WSP plan area are sparsely settled. Apart from the Shannon Ranch, there are a total of 6 dwellings located within one mile of the WSP boundary, 2 of which are located within one-half mile. The EIR will evaluate the potential for land use conflicts and adjacency impacts with residential and non-residential land uses in proximity to the WSP plan area.

The Westlands Solar Park is surrounded by agricultural lands that are expected to remain in cultivation for the foreseeable future. While solar PV facilities are generally considered compatible with agricultural use, the EIR will evaluate the potential of the WSP generating facilities to result in land use conflicts with these neighboring agricultural uses.

All of the lands within the WSP site are zoned either “AG-40 (General Agriculture – 40 Acre Min.)” or “AX (Exclusive Agriculture).” Both zoning districts permit solar photovoltaic electrical generating facilities as a conditional use. The EIR will evaluate the consistency of the WSP Master Plan and solar development with all applicable Kings County General Plan designations and policies, zoning regulations, and development standards.

The WSP plan area lies partially within the Military Influence Zone (MIA) of Naval Air Station Lemoore. The EIR will evaluate the consistency of the WSP Master Plan with the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) issued in 2011 by NAS Lemoore in coordination with neighboring jurisdictions.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The planned upgraded transmission corridor traverses lands in active agricultural cultivation. No portion of the corridor passes over or near existing residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities such as dairies. The transmission line would pass over the California Aqueduct and State Route 269 at locations adjacent to existing transmission line crossings. The EIR will evaluate the compatibility of the transmission corridor with ongoing agricultural operations and identify any potential areas of conflict with the neighboring properties. It is expected that agricultural cultivation would continue beneath the overhead transmission lines although there would be some restrictions on agricultural activities such as aerial spraying in proximity to the lines and towers.

*Westlands Transmission Corridor* – This transmission corridor passes through cultivated agricultural lands and retired farmlands within the Westlands Water District. North of the Fresno-Merced County line, the transmission corridor traverses chaparral covered foothills en route to the Los Banos Substation. No portion of the transmission corridor passes over or near existing residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities such as dairies. The corridor passes over several state highways, including I-5, would cross the California Aqueduct in two places. The transmission corridor does not pass over or near any wildlife refuges or other public lands. The EIR will evaluate the compatibility of the corridor alignment with surrounding land uses and address any potential areas of conflict.

*Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor* – This transmission corridor passes through predominantly cultivated agricultural lands in Fresno and Madera Counties. The corridor passes between the communities of San Joaquin and Tranquillity, and then passes between the Mendota and Kerman wildlife areas before crossing San Joaquin River into Madera County. In southern Madera County, the corridor stays to the west and north of the rural residential development concentrated north of the river. The corridor crosses over several state highways, including SR-180, SR-145, and SR-99. No portion of the transmission corridor passes over or near existing residential or non-residential structures or agricultural facilities. The EIR will evaluate the compatibility of corridor alignment with surrounding land uses and address any potential areas of conflict.

## Noise

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP solar facilities would result in increased noise levels associated with construction and project operation. During the construction phase, noise sources would be generated by: grading and excavation; construction vehicle traffic; and construction of operation and maintenance facilities, substations, power transmission lines, and roadways. The solar arrays would be supported by metal poles which would be vibration-driven into the ground and would not involve the use of impact pile drivers.

Operational noise sources associated with the solar facilities would include: traffic generated by permanent employees; mechanical noise from solar panel rotation and electrical switching gear; and humming and buzzing associated with substations and high-voltage transmission lines.

The lands surrounding the WSP plan area are very sparsely populated and there are very few noise-sensitive receptors within one mile of the WSP boundaries. The potential impacts upon these receptors will be evaluated by a qualified acoustical consultant. The technical noise study and EIR will address all potential noise impacts associated with the solar facilities, and will identify program-level mitigation measures as appropriate.

*Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades* – The construction of the transmission upgrades would involve grading for new access roads to tower sites, grading and excavation for tower foundations,

concrete-pours for tower footings, assembly of steel-lattice towers, and pulling and tensioning of cable along the tower line. All of these construction activities would generate noise, and the added movement of equipment and vehicles along access routes would increase traffic noise. The tower construction sites would be relatively small and would be spaced approximately 800 feet apart. There are very few residential receptors in proximity to the corridor that would be subject to transmission construction noise. During operation of the transmission corridor, the low level noise emitted by high voltage lines would be audible for short distances. Maintenance activities along the transmission line would be infrequent and would generate very low levels of noise. The technical noise study and EIR will evaluate the potential noise impacts to the sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the transmission line and identify program-level noise mitigations as appropriate.

*Westlands and Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridors* – The new transmission corridors would involve very similar construction and operational characteristics as described above for the construction of the Henrietta-Gates transmission upgrades. Both corridor alignments were planned to avoid sensitive residential receptors. The technical noise study and EIR will evaluate the potential noise impacts associated with the transmission corridors and identify program-level mitigation measures as appropriate.

### Public Services

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The primary public services required for the WSP generating facilities include fire protection and police services. Fire protection services would be provided by the Kings County Fire Department from its nearby stations at Stratford to the east, Kettleman City to the south, and Avenal to the southwest of the WSP plan area. There is a low risk of structure fire or wildfire associated with the solar generating facilities, and emergency water supplies would be provided in on-site storage reservoirs for fire-fighting purposes. Although the solar facilities would result in a slight increase in demand for fire services, they are not expected to result in the need for new or expanded fire department facilities.

Police services in the WSP area are provided by the Kings County Sheriff's Department and the California Highway Patrol. The solar generating facilities would include full-time on-site security staff with video monitoring of facilities. Although the solar facilities would result in a slight increase in demand for police services, it is not expected that this would result in the need for new or expanded Sheriff's Department facilities. The EIR will address potential impacts to fire, police, and other potentially affected public services.

*Transmission Corridors* – The Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would not result in a significant increase in demand for police or fire services. The Highway Patrol will likely be needed for traffic control during the pulling of transmission cable over I-5 and other state highways, and the Sheriff's Departments of Kings, and Fresno, Merced, and Madera Counties would likely provide traffic control during conductor pulling over county roads. Also, the chaparral covered foothills in the northwestern segment of the Westlands Transmission Corridor would be subject to high fire hazard. The EIR will include discussions of increased demand for these public services associated with the transmission corridors.

### Transportation/Circulation

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – The WSP solar facilities will generate traffic during the construction and operational phases. Construction traffic will be generated by: construction workers commuting from the surrounding communities; materials trucks hauling project components from the Bay Area and Southern California; a variety of construction vehicles and semi-trailer trucks hauling major pieces of construction equipment to the WSP site from various off-site locations; and dump



trucks and concrete trucks hauling aggregate and ready-mix concrete from regional sources. Operational traffic will be generated by: permanent employees commuting from surrounding communities; delivery vehicles; maintenance trucks; and materials trucks hauling replacement components and parts to the site.

The analysis of construction and operational traffic impacts will be conducted by a qualified transportation engineering firm. The traffic impact analysis will document existing traffic conditions, and evaluate near-term and far-term impacts. Since construction will be ongoing for several years after the initial phases of solar development are complete, the analysis will consider the combined traffic generated by construction and operational activity during the overlapping period.

*Transmission Corridors* – The Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would generate traffic primarily in the construction phases when materials, equipment, and workers would be transported to and from the construction areas. Traffic generation would be relatively light and the focus of activity would move from site to site along the tower lines. Operational traffic would be negligible since it would consist only of occasional travel by staff for periodic inspection and maintenance of the tower lines. The traffic impact study for the WSP solar generating facilities would consider the timing of transmission line construction and factor the added trips into the overall traffic calculations. Special consideration would be given to the potential need for traffic control measures when transmission cables are to be pulled across state highways and county roads, and to accommodate the transportation of oversize loads on the local roadway network.

In addition to the level of service analysis, the traffic study and EIR will make recommendations for traffic control measures, as appropriate, at a programmatic level. The traffic report and EIR may also identify the need for road condition surveys to be undertaken prior to the approval of each solar generating facility in order to provide a baseline for analyzing potential wear and tear by heavy truck and equipment traffic during the construction phases, which would inform the need for remedial roadwork upon completion of the solar generating facilities.

### Utilities and Service Systems

The primary utility and service systems that would be required by the solar facilities include water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, and solid waste collection and disposal, as discussed below.

#### *Water Supply and Groundwater*

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – Water supply for the solar facilities would be required during both the construction and operational phases. During grading and construction, water would be needed for dust control, cleaning of equipment and vehicles, and domestic use. It is expected that existing on-site agricultural wells would provide non-potable water for non-domestic uses during construction, and that potable water for consumption by construction workers would be provided by bottled water brought to the site.

Operational water demands would be generated by the need for periodic panel washing, general maintenance and landscape irrigation, domestic water consumption by operations and maintenance staff, and stored water supply for fire suppression. It is expected that operational water supply would consist of imported surface water provided through Westlands Water District. In 2011, the WWD Board of Directors established an annual water allocation for solar facilities of up to 5 acre-feet per 160 acres for operational demands from facilities on retired farmland within the District. This allocation would provide for at least four annual panel washings and general maintenance, which is

considered adequate for PV solar operations in the San Joaquin Valley. Therefore, no groundwater would be pumped to support PV solar operations.

The EIR will describe groundwater conditions at the WSP site, and will evaluate the effect of WSP solar facilities on groundwater resources. This discussion will be based on a Water Supply Assessment (WSA), as required under SB 610 for large projects, and under SB 267 for PV solar facilities generating 75 MW or more. The WSA will be prepared by a qualified water resources consultant. Under current conditions, groundwater pumping is required for crop irrigation, especially during dry years when surface water deliveries are substantially curtailed. Under project conditions, the WSP solar facilities would involve groundwater pumping only during the construction phase for dust control and equipment wash down. Upon full buildout of the Westlands Solar Park, groundwater pumping for the solar facilities would cease entirely since the fully operational WSP would rely solely on imported water supply.

*Transmission Corridors* – The construction of the Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would require non-potable water primarily for dust control. It is expected that construction water would be provided by tanker trucks which would be filled with water pumped from agricultural wells within the WSP plan area or along the transmission routes. The EIR will include an evaluation of water supply demands from transmission corridor construction.

#### *Wastewater*

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – During the construction phases of the solar facilities, domestic wastewater generated by construction workers would be accommodated through the use of portable toilet facilities, with regular cleanout and disposal at an approved site. During operation, the O & M (operations and maintenance) facilities for each solar facility would be served by domestic septic systems and leachfields which would be designed, installed, and maintained in accordance with County requirements. The EIR will include of wastewater disposal during the construction and operational phases of the project.

*Transmission Corridors* – During construction of the Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors, it is expected that portable toilet facilities would provide wastewater service for construction workers. No permanent employees would be present upon completion of the transmission lines, so permanent wastewater facilities would not be required once the transmission lines are completed.

#### *Solid Waste*

*WSP Solar Generating Facilities* – Solid waste would be generated during construction and operation of WSP generating facilities. The EIR will describe solid waste generation and provisions for collection, recycling, and disposal of construction and operational waste materials, and the potential effects of this solid waste generation upon local landfills.

*Transmission Corridors* – Solid waste generation from the Henrietta-Gates, Westlands, and Helm-Gregg transmission corridors would occur primarily during construction. The EIR would describe provisions for collection, recycling, and reuse of construction waste.

### Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will include an evaluation of potential cumulative impacts related to each environmental category addressed in the EIR. As required under CEQA, the cumulative impact analyses will consider the combined effects of the construction of WSP solar facilities and related transmission lines, and other approved, pending, and reasonably anticipated future projects. For each impact category, the EIR will analyze whether the cumulative impact would be significant, and if so, whether the contribution from WSP development and transmission line construction would be cumulatively considerable, as required under CEQA. The EIR would identify program-level mitigation measures for cumulative impacts where WSP development and/or transmission line construction is determined to potentially result in a considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact.

### Other Checklist Items

Those checklist items contained in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines that are determined to have no impact or a negligible level of impact associated with them will be briefly discussed in an EIR chapter entitled “Effects Found Not To Be Significant” as provided under Section 15128 of the CEQA Guidelines. Examples of non-significant impact categories are expected to include: Population and Housing; and Recreation. It is noted that Social and Economic Impacts are not considered to be physical impacts covered by CEQA, unless there is a social or economic impact associated with the project that would indirectly result in an adverse physical environmental impact. The EIR will consider the potential for secondary physical impacts that might arise from any social and economic impacts associated with WSP development or transmission line construction. This approach is prescribed in Section 15131 of the CEQA Guidelines.

### Other CEQA-Mandated Analyses

In addition to the topical impact discussions, described above, the EIR will also address the summary analyses required under CEQA, including the following: Alternatives to the Proposed Action; Growth-Inducing Effects; Significant and Unavoidable Impacts; and Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes.

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Edmund G. Brown Jr.  
Governor

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research  
State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit



Ken Alex  
Director

**Notice of Preparation**

March 15, 2013

To: Reviewing Agencies

Re: Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities  
SCH# 2013031043

Attached for your review and comment is the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Responsible agencies must transmit their comments on the scope and content of the NOP, focusing on specific information related to their own statutory responsibility, within 30 days of receipt of the NOP from the Lead Agency. This is a courtesy notice provided by the State Clearinghouse with a reminder for you to comment in a timely manner. We encourage other agencies to also respond to this notice and express their concerns early in the environmental review process.


Please direct your comments to:

**Kiti Buelna**  
**Westlands Water District**  
**3130 N. Fresno Street**  
**PO Box 6056**  
**Fresno, CA 93703**

with a copy to the State Clearinghouse in the Office of Planning and Research. Please refer to the SCH number noted above in all correspondence concerning this project.

If you have any questions about the environmental document review process, please call the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613.

Sincerely,

  
Scott Morgan  
Director, State Clearinghouse

Attachments  
cc: Lead Agency

Document Details Report  
State Clearinghouse Data Base

**SCH#** 2013031043  
**Project Title** Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities  
**Lead Agency** Westlands Water District

**Type** NOP Notice of Preparation

**Description** Westlands Solar Park (WSP) Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities - Comprises following elements:  
1) WSP Generating Facilities - 24,000-acre site planned for 2,400 MW solar PV generating facilities, phased in 200 MW projects.  
2) Henrietta to Gates Transmission Upgrades - Construct a second transmission line along existing 230-kV Henrietta-Gates line.  
3) Path 15 Transmission Corridor - Upgrade to connect Gates Substation to Los Banos Substation; transmission route diverges from existing transmission corridor near SR 198, runs through interior of Westlands WD, and rejoins corridor at Panoche Substn.  
4) Gates to Gregg Transmission Corridor - New transmission route running north from Gates substation and over San Joaquin River where it swings northeast and east through Madera County, then crosses SR-99 on approach to Gregg Substation.

**Lead Agency Contact**

**Name** Kiti Buelna  
**Agency** Westlands Water District  
**Phone** 559 241 6226  
**email**  
**Address** 3130 N. Fresno Street  
PO Box 6056  
**City** Fresno  
**Fax**  
**State** CA **Zip** 93703

**Project Location**

**County** Kings, Fresno, Merced, Madera  
**City** Kettleman, Lemoore  
**Region**  
**Cross Streets** Avenal Cutoff Road and Gale Avenue  
**Lat / Long** 36° 10' 44" N / 119° 57' 16" W  
**Parcel No.** 026-300-032, -033, -038, -043, etc.  
**Township** 20S **Range** 19E **Section** 14-23+ **Base** MDB&M

**Proximity to:**

**Highways** Hwy 198, 41, 269, 33, 145, I-5  
**Airports** NAS Lemoore  
**Railways** UPRR, SJVRR  
**Waterways** Kings R., San Joaquin R., Fresno Slough, Cal. Aqueduct  
**Schools** Stratford Grammar School  
**Land Use** Land Use - Agriculture;  
Z: AG-40, AX  
GPD - Gen. Ag. -40 ac; Excl. Ag. -40ac

**Project Issues** Aesthetic/Visual; Agricultural Land; Air Quality; Archaeologic-Historic; Biological Resources; Drainage/Absorption; Flood Plain/Flooding; Forest Land/Fire Hazard; Geologic/Seismic; Noise; Public Services; Septic System; Solid Waste; Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading; Toxic/Hazardous; Traffic/Circulation; Vegetation; Water Quality; Water Supply; Wetland/Riparian; Growth Inducing; Landuse; Cumulative Effects; Other Issues

Document Details Report  
State Clearinghouse Data Base

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**Reviewing Agencies** Resources Agency; Department of Conservation; California Energy Commission; Central Valley Flood Protection Board; Office of Historic Preservation; Department of Parks and Recreation; Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 4; Delta Stewardship Council; Delta Protection Commission; Native American Heritage Commission; Public Utilities Commission; State Lands Commission; Caltrans, Division of Aeronautics; California Highway Patrol; Caltrans, District 6; Air Resources Board, Major Industrial Projects; State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Quality; Regional Water Quality Control Bd., Region 5 (Fresno)

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**Date Received** 03/15/2013      **Start of Review** 03/15/2013      **End of Review** 04/15/2013



# Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal

Mail to: State Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 (916) 445-0613  
 For Hand Delivery/Street Address: 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SCH # 201303104

Project Title: Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities

Lead Agency: Westlands Water District

Contact Person: Kiti Buelna

Mailing Address: 3130 N. Fresno Street, P.O. Box 6056

Phone: (559) 241-6226

City: Fresno

Zip: 93703-6056

County: Fresno

Project Location: County: Kings, Fresno, Merced, Madera City/Nearest Community: Stratford, Kettleman City, NAS Lemoore

Cross Streets: Avenal Cutoff Road and Gale Avenue

Zip Code: 93245

Longitude/Latitude (degrees, minutes and seconds): 36 ° 10 ' 44 " N / 119 ° 57 ' 16 " W Total Acres: ~24,000

Assessor's Parcel No.: 026-300-032, -033, -038, -043, etc.

Section: 14-23+

Twp.: 20 S

Range: 19 E

Base: MDBM

Within 2 Miles: State Hwy #: 198, 41, 269, 33, 145, I-5

Waterways: Kings R., San Joaquin R., Fresno Slough, Cal. Aqueduct

Airports: NAS Lemoore

Railways: Union Pacific, SJVRR

Schools: Stratford Grammar Sch.

## Document Type:

CEQA: ☒ NOP

☐ Draft EIR

NEPA: ☐ NOI

Other: ☐ Joint Document

☐ Early Cons

☐ Supplement/Subsequent EIR

☐ EA

☐ Final Document

☐ Neg Dec

(Prior SCH No.)

☐ Draft EIS

☐ Other:

☐ Mit Neg Dec

Other:

☐ FONSI

## Local Action Type:

☐ General Plan Update

☐ Specific Plan

☐ Rezone

☐ Annexation

☐ General Plan Amendment

☒ Master Plan

☐ Prezone

☐ Redevelopment

☐ General Plan Element

☐ Planned Unit Development

☐ Use Permit

☐ Coastal Permit

☐ Community Plan

☐ Site Plan

☐ Land Division (Subdivision, etc.)

☐ Other:

## Development Type:

☐ Residential: Units

Acres

☐ Office: Sq.ft.

Acres

Employees

☐ Commercial: Sq.ft.

Acres

Employees

☐ Industrial: Sq.ft.

Acres

Employees

☐ Educational:

☐ Recreational:

☐ Water Facilities: Type

MGD

☐ Transportation: Type

☐ Mining: Mineral

☒ Power: Type

PV Solar

MW 2,400

☐ Waste Treatment: Type

MGD

☐ Hazardous Waste: Type

☒ Other: Power Transmission Lines and Upgrades

## Project Issues Discussed in Document:

☒ Aesthetic/Visual

☐ Fiscal

☐ Recreation/Parks

☒ Vegetation

☒ Agricultural Land

☒ Flood Plain/Flooding

☐ Schools/Universities

☒ Water Quality

☒ Air Quality

☒ Forest Land/Fire Hazard

☒ Septic Systems

☒ Water Supply/Groundwater

☒ Archeological/Historical

☒ Geologic/Seismic

☐ Sewer Capacity

☒ Wetland/Riparian

☒ Biological Resources

☐ Minerals

☒ Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading

☒ Growth Inducement

☐ Coastal Zone

☒ Noise

☒ Solid Waste

☒ Land Use

☒ Drainage/Absorption

☐ Population/Housing Balance

☒ Toxic/Hazardous

☒ Cumulative Effects

☐ Economic/Jobs

☒ Public Services/Facilities

☒ Traffic/Circulation

☒ Other: GHG

## Present Land Use/Zoning/General Plan Designation:

Land Use - Agriculture; Zoning - AG-40 (Gen. Ag.-40 ac. min.), AX (Excl. Ag.); General Plan - Gen. Ag.-40 ac.; Excl. Ag.-40 ac.

## Project Description: (please use a separate page if necessary)

Westlands Solar Park (WSP) Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities - Comprises following 4 elements:

- 1) WSP Generating Facilities - 24,000-acre site planned for 2,400 MW solar PV generating facilities, phased in 200 MW projects.
- 2) Henrietta to Gates Transmission Upgrades - Construct a second transmission line along existing 230-kV Henrietta-Gates line.
- 3) Path 15 Transmission Corridor - Upgrade to connect Gates Substation to Los Banos Substation; transmission route diverges from existing transmission corridor near SR 198, runs through interior of Westlands WD, and rejoins corridor at Panoche Substn.
- 4) Gates to Gregg Transmission Corridor - New transmission route running north from Gates substation and over San Joaquin River where it swings northeast and east through Madera County, then crosses SR-99 on approach to Gregg Substation.

Note: The State Clearinghouse will assign identification numbers for all new projects. If a SCH number already exists for a project (e.g. Notice of Preparation or previous draft document) please fill in.

## Reviewing Agencies Checklist

Lead Agencies may recommend State Clearinghouse distribution by marking agencies below with an "X".  
If you have already sent your document to the agency please denote that with an "S".

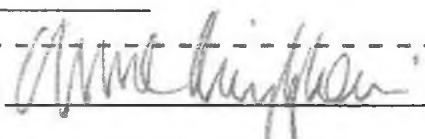
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Resources Board	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office of Historic Preservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Boating & Waterways, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> Office of Public School Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> California Emergency Management Agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation, Department of
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California Highway Patrol	<input type="checkbox"/> Pesticide Regulation, Department of
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caltrans District # <u>6</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Utilities Commission
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Division of Aeronautics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional WQCB # <u>5F</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources Agency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Central Valley Flood Protection Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources Recycling and Recovery, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> Coachella Valley Mtns. Conservancy	<input type="checkbox"/> S.F. Bay Conservation & Development Comm.
<input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> San Gabriel & Lower L.A. Rivers & Mtns. Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/> Colorado River Board	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> San Joaquin River Conservancy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Monica Mtns. Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/> Corrections, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Lands Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Protection Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Clean Water Grants
<input type="checkbox"/> Education, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Rights
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fish & Game Region # <u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food & Agriculture, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toxic Substances Control, Department of
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Resources, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> General Services, Department of	
<input type="checkbox"/> Health Services, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Community Development	Other: _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native American Heritage Commission	

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Local Public Review Period (to be filled in by lead agency)

Starting Date March 15, 2013 Ending Date April 15, 2013  
-----

Lead Agency (Complete if applicable):

Consulting Firm: <u>Verrips Consulting</u>	Applicant: <u>Westside Holdings LLC</u>
Address: <u>11942 Red Hill Avenue</u>	Address: <u>1005 N. Demaree</u>
City/State/Zip: <u>Santa Ana, CA 92705</u>	City/State/Zip: <u>Visalia, CA 93291-4101</u>
Contact: <u>Bert Verrips</u>	Phone: <u>(559) 936-9230</u>
Phone: <u>(714) 838-0192</u>	

-----  
Signature of Lead Agency Representative:  Date: Mar 13, 2013

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 21161, Public Resources Code.

2013031043

Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)

RWQCB 1  
Cathleen Hudson  
North Coast Region

 **RWQCR 2**  
Environmental D  
Coordinator


San Francisco Bay Region (2)

RWQCB 3  
Central Coast R

Los Angeles Region (4)


DIVOCES

**RWQCB 5F**  
**Central Valley Region (5)**  
**Fresno Branch Office**

 **RWQCB 5R**  
Central Valley Region (5)  
Bedding Branch Office

RWQCB 6  
Laboratory Division (5)

**Lahontan Region (6)**  
**Victorville Branch Office**

 **RWQCB 8**  
Colorado River Basin Region (7)  
Santa Ana Region (8)

RWQCB 9  
San Diego Region (9)

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_



Conservancy

Dennis Castillo

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION****DISTRICT 6**

1352 WEST OLIVE AVENUE

P.O. BOX 12616

FRESNO, CA 93778-2616

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FAX (559) 445-5875

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April 5, 2013

2135-IGR/CEQA

06-KIN-41-PM 28.43; NOP-EIR

Westlands Water District Solar Park Project

Ms. Kiti Buelna  
Westlands Water District  
3130 N. Fresno St.  
P.O. Box 6056  
Fresno, CA 93703-6056

Dear Ms. Buelna,

The District 6 Office of Traffic Operations has completed its review of the NOP of a Draft EIR for the proposal of approximately 24,000 acres solar generation, operation and transmission facility. The proposed project location is situated in the west-central Kings County and is bounded by SR 198 on the north, SR 41 on the east, and Fresno County line on the west. Based on the statements from the Notice of Preparation of the draft EIR, we have the following comments and recommendations:

Page 22 under "Transportation/Circulation" section: It is requested that the applicant prepares a traffic impact analysis to evaluate the traffic impact/circulation to the State facility near the vicinity of the project during the construction, operation and maintenance phases of the project. Since traffic impact would likely be the heaviest during the construction phases, it is requested that all construction related trips be provided. It is recommended that truck trips be restricted to off traffic peak hours and should be far apart between trips (e.g., 5 minutes apart) during the construction phases. Facility access to/from State Route shall be evaluated and mitigated/ improved if needed. It is suggested that number of access points from/to State Route be limited to reduce potential conflict with public traffic. Roadway mitigation/improvement within the State right of way shall be constructed per Caltrans standard/specifications. According to the Transportation Concept Report (TCR), this segment of SR 41 is designated as a 4-lane conventional highway on a 146 feet right-of-way in the future. It is request that no solar panels or structure of any kind be located within 20 feet from the existing or future right-of-way. A tentative schedule for phases in construction should also be provided in the document.

In addition, an Encroachment Permit must be obtained for all activities for placement of encroachments within, under or over the State Right-of-way, that may include temporary access (during construction) or permanent access from and to Right of Way of State Highways. All new aerial crossing over State Right of Way Highways should be normal (90 Degree) to the highway alignment where practical. New supports (poles) for overhead crossings must be as close to the Right-of-Way line as possible, no poles are allowed in access controlled right of way of Interstate 5, and Highway 99. All installations will be

as per CPUC regulations including clearance requirements. If the applicant does not have a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN), only a limited number of transversal crossings will be allowed, and the applicant will prove that the properties on both sides of highways belong to the applicant, or arrangements had been made and agreement reached with the current land owners.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this Notice of Preparation. If you have any questions regarding our comments, feel free to contact me at (559) 445-5763.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David T. Madden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Madden" clearly legible.

David T. Madden  
Associate Transportation Planner  
South Branch

Cc: Paul Marquez  
Senior Planner, South Branch





State of California – Natural Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE  
Central Region  
1234 East Shaw Avenue  
Fresno, California 93710  
(559) 243-4005  
[www.wildlife.ca.gov](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov)

EDMUND G. BROWN, JR., Governor  
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



April 11, 2013

Kita Buelna  
Westlands Water District  
3130 North Fresno Street  
Fresno, California 93703

**Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)  
Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities  
SCH No. 2013031043**

Dear Ms. Buelna:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has reviewed the above NOP of a Draft EIR for the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities (Project) submitted by the Westlands Water District (Lead Agency). Approval of the Project would allow the construction and operation of a 2,400 mega-watt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar energy generating facility (Westlands Solar Park, WSP) on approximately 24,000 acres of land, phased in 200-MW (2,000 acre) increments over a period of 12 years; construction of a new transmission line that parallels the existing Henrietta to Gates transmission line for 11 miles; construction of a new transmission line that runs parallel to the existing Central California Transmission Corridor along Interstate 5 for 87 miles to connect the Gates Substation to the Los Banos Substation, diverging for approximately 40 miles to the interior of Westlands Water District land then reconnecting 4 miles south of the Panoche Substation; and construction of a new transmission line from Gates Substation to Gregg Substation (unspecified distance). The solar facility portion of the Project is located south of State Route 198, northwest of State Route 41, and east of the Fresno/Kings County line in unincorporated areas of Kings County, California.

Page 7 of the NOP states that the above described Project will receive program-level environmental review in the EIR. The Department assumes this means that each phase of the Project will have an additional California Environmental Quality Act (CESA) document prepared that includes phase-specific analysis and avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures.

However, page 11 of the NOP states that the purpose of the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan EIR is to adopt it as a planning framework for the incremental development of the PV generating facility but also to adopt the three proposed transmission routes as the preferred routes. This implies that the EIR will contain a thorough Project description with regard to the transmission corridors, complete analysis to determine the extent of Project-related impacts, and also appropriate avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

## **Department Jurisdiction**

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Authority:** The Department is a Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources with the responsibility under CEQA for commenting on projects that could impact fish and wildlife resources. In this role, the Department is responsible for providing, as available, biological expertise to review and comment on environmental documents and impacts arising from project activities. Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1802, the Department has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species.

**California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Authority:** The Department has regulatory authority over projects that could result in the "take" of any species listed by the State as threatened or endangered pursuant to CESA. If the Project could result in the take of any species listed as threatened or endangered under CESA, the Department may need to issue an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) for the Project. CEQA requires a Mandatory Finding of Significance if a project is likely to substantially impact threatened or endangered species (Sections 21001{c}, 21083, Guidelines sections 15380, 15064, 15065). Impacts must be avoided or mitigated to less than significant levels unless the CEQA Lead Agency makes and supports a Statement of Overriding Consideration (SOC). The CEQA Lead Agency's SOC does not eliminate the Project proponent's obligation to comply with Fish and Game Code Section 2080.

**Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (LSAA):** The Department also has regulatory authority with regard to activities occurring in streams and/or lakes that could adversely affect any fish or wildlife resource, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 1600 *et seq.* If the proposed Project would substantially divert water and/or alter the bed, bank, or channel of a lake and/or stream or associated riparian vegetation, an LSAA Notification would be warranted. The Department is required to comply with CEQA in the issuance or the renewal of an LSAA. Therefore, for efficiency in environmental compliance, we recommend that the CEQA document prepared for this Project describe and propose mitigation for any Project activities under the Department's regulatory authority under Fish and Game Code Section 1600 *et seq.* This would reduce the need for the Department to require extensive additional environmental review for an LSAA for this Project in the future. For additional information on notification requirements, please contact our staff in the Lake and Streambed Alteration Program at (559) 243-4593.

**Fully Protected Species:** The Department has jurisdiction over fully protected species of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles, and fish pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515. Take of any fully protected species is prohibited and the Department cannot authorize their take.

**Bird Protection:** The Department has jurisdiction over actions which may result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Sections of the Fish and Game Code that protect birds, their eggs and nests include sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5



(regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

**Water Quality Protection:** Pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 5650, it is unlawful to deposit in, permit to pass into, or place where it can pass into a "Waters of the State" any substance or material deleterious to fish, plant life, or bird life. Additionally, Fish and Game Code Section 5652 prohibits the deposition of any cans, bottles, garbage, motor vehicle or parts thereof, or rubbish within 150 feet of the high water mark of the "Waters of the State" (or where they can pass in to any "Waters of the State").

### **General Comments**

Because of the size of the Westlands Solar Park and the extent of the transmission lines, wildlife species have the potential to be impacted during implementation of the Project. The Department recommends that the Lead Agency conduct a biological assessment to determine what habitat types, vegetation communities, and wetlands exist within the entire Project footprint and in the Project vicinity. The biological assessment would provide a baseline on wildlife potentially impacted through construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning activities and provide avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to be included in the EIR.

Page 15 of the NOP states that biological surveys were conducted throughout the Westlands Solar Park area. The Department recommends including the results of these surveys as an appendix in the EIR. Depending on when these surveys were conducted and the results, additional survey efforts may be appropriate.

To ensure that potential Project impacts are adequately identified and addressed, the Department recommends the Lead Agency conduct additional site-specific biological assessments and subsequent species-specific surveys when findings during the biological assessments indicate that such surveys are warranted throughout the transmission line corridors and within the Westlands Solar Park area as necessary. Conduct species-specific surveys (if they have not already been conducted) according to Department-accepted protocols, which can be found at our website at [http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey\\_monitor.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey_monitor.html). If our website does not contain a survey protocol for a particular species, the Department recommends the Lead Agency submit a proposed protocol to the Department and/or the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for review and approval prior to implementation.

Conversion from agricultural lands to solar facilities has the potential to displace wildlife species and impact foraging opportunities. In perpetuity habitat conservation should be included as a mitigation measure in the EIR or other CEQA documents prepared for each phase of the Project where the conversion of agricultural lands to solar results in potentially significant impacts. In many cases, conservation of comparable agricultural land would be appropriate.

The Department recommends including the following general mitigation measures in the EIR and any subsequent CEQA documents prepared for individual phases.

1. Restrict outdoor lighting except as necessary for safety.
2. Require that all lights be shielded, pointed downward, and directed away from adjacent habitat.
3. Require motion sensor-type nighttime lighting so that the lights do not stay on constantly and interfere with nocturnal wildlife activities.
4. Install perimeter fencing so that the bottom of the fence is 5 to 7 inches above the ground surface and knuckled under to create a smooth edge to allow for unimpeded movement of wildlife through the project sites. This will help avoid wildlife connectivity issues posed by this large scale solar Project.
5. Require that all vertical pipes associated with solar mounts or chain-link fencing be capped at the time of installation to prevent entrapment and death of birds.
6. Prohibit the use of rodenticides. If rodenticide use is allowed, obtain an ITP from the Department for listed species such as San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*, SJKF), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*, SWHA), and any other State-listed species known to occur in the Project site's vicinity before starting rodenticide use.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the NOP for this renewable energy project. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Lisa Gymer, Staff Environmental Scientist, at the address on this letterhead, by telephone at (559) 243-4014, extension 238, or by electronic mail at [lisa.gymer@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:lisa.gymer@wildlife.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Jeffrey R. Single, Ph.D.  
Regional Manager

cc: See Page Five

Kita Buelna  
April 11, 2013  
Page 5

cc: Thomas Leeman  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Sacramento Office  
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605  
Sacramento, California 95825

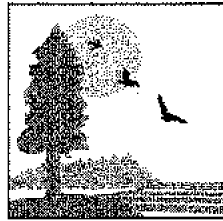
Debra Mahnke  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
1685 E Street, Suite 100  
Fresno, California 93706

State Clearinghouse  
Post Office Box 3044  
Sacramento, California 95812-3044

ec: California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
William Condon, Climate Science and Renewable Energy Branch  
Stuart Itoga, Climate Science and Renewable Energy Branch  
Julie Vance, Central Region  
Lisa Gymer, Central Region

**CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION**

100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100-South  
Sacramento, CA 95825-8202

**JENNIFER LUCCHESI, Executive Officer**

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from Voice Phone 1-800-735-2922

**Contact Phone: (916) 574-1900**

**Contact FAX: (916) 574-1885**

April 15, 2013

File Ref: SCH # 2013031043

Kiti Buelna  
Westlands Water District  
3130 N. Fresno Street  
PO Box 6056  
Fresno, CA 93703

**Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities, Kings, Fresno, Merced and Madera Counties**

Dear Ms. Buelna:

The California State Lands Commission (CSLC) staff has reviewed the subject NOP for a PEIR for the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities (Project), which is being prepared by the Westlands Water District. The Westlands Water District, as a public agency proposing to carry out a project, is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.). The CSLC is a trustee agency because of its trust responsibility for projects that could directly or indirectly affect sovereign lands, their accompanying Public Trust resources or uses, and the public easement in navigable waters. Additionally, because the Project involves work on sovereign lands, the CSLC will act as a responsible agency.

**CSLC Jurisdiction and Public Trust Lands**

The CSLC has jurisdiction and management authority over all ungranted tidelands, submerged lands, and the beds of navigable lakes and waterways. The CSLC also has certain residual and review authority for tidelands and submerged lands legislatively granted in trust to local jurisdictions (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 6301, 6306). All tidelands and submerged lands, granted or ungranted, as well as navigable lakes and waterways, are subject to the protections of the Common Law Public Trust.

As general background, the State of California acquired sovereign ownership of all tidelands and submerged lands and beds of navigable lakes and waterways upon its admission to the United States in 1850. The State holds these lands for the benefit of all people of the State for statewide Public Trust purposes, which include but are not limited to waterborne commerce, navigation, fisheries, water-related recreation, habitat preservation, and open space. On navigable non-tidal waterways, including lakes, the State holds fee ownership of the bed of the waterway landward to the ordinary low

water mark and a Public Trust easement landward to the ordinary high water mark, except where the boundary has been fixed by an agreement or a court. Such boundaries may not be readily apparent from present day site inspections.

Please be advised that if the proposed Project activities within and crossing over the river channel of the Kings River, San Joaquin River, and Fresno Slough involve sovereign lands under the jurisdiction of the CSLC, a lease from the CSLC will be required. However, since the NOP does not include project-specific details, CSLC staff is unable to determine exactly where the CSLC's jurisdiction lies with respect to the Project at this time. CSLC staff, therefore, requests the following.

- Please provide more information on the exact location of the proposed transmission lines over the Kings River, San Joaquin River, and Fresno Slough so that CSLC staff can determine the extent of the CSLC's jurisdiction. Specifically, please provide a comprehensive Project overview of where specific activities will occur to CSLC staff, particularly in relation to any river crossings, when these details become available. Additionally, as the Project proceeds, please submit additional information, including detailed maps, to enable CSLC staff to determine which components of the Project will require a lease or permit.
- Since the transmission line crossing of the San Joaquin River will require a lease, CSLC staff requests to be added to the list of "Approvals Required from Public Agencies" in the PEIR.
- Please place CSLC staff on any future distribution mailing list for the Project.

These comments are made without prejudice to any future assertion of State ownership or public rights, should circumstances change, or should additional information become available. This letter is not intended, nor should it be construed as a waiver or limitation of any right, title, or interest of the State of California in any lands under its jurisdiction.

### **Project Description**

The Westlands Water District proposes to adopt the: (1) Westlands Solar Park Master Plan, (2) Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrade, (3) Westlands Transmission Corridor and (4) Helm-Gregg Transmission Corridor to meet the District's objectives and needs as follows:

- Retire the Westlands Solar Project site from irrigated agriculture, and provide economically viable and environmentally beneficial use of the site's physically impaired soils;
- Provide a comprehensive and cohesive document to guide and facilitate the beneficial reuse of drainage-impaired lands through developing renewable energy generation in the Westlands Competitive Renewable Energy Zone;
- Establish preferred transmission corridor routes through the district to best facilitate the economic development of drainage-impaired lands.

From the Project Description, CSLC staff understands that the Project would include the following components:

- Westlands Solar Park. The Westlands Solar Park consists of developing approximately 24,000 acres in west-central Kings County for a utility-scale solar energy generation facility that would include photovoltaic solar arrays and associated electrical equipment, interconnections, support facilities, substations, and other utilities infrastructure. Total electrical generating capacity is expected to be 2,400 Megawatts;
- Henrietta to Gates Transmission Upgrades. Planned upgrades involve construction of a new 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission tower line running parallel to the existing transmission corridor;
- Westlands Transmission Corridor. The planned transmission corridor would involve construction of an 87 mile, 500 kV transmission line running generally parallel to the existing transmission corridor from the Gates Substation to the Los Banos Substation;
- Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor. This new transmission corridor would branch off the planned Westlands Transmission Corridor at the Helm substation near the city of San Joaquin and run north across the San Joaquin River and then east to the Gregg substation.

### **Environmental Review**

CSLC staff requests that the following potential impacts be analyzed in the PEIR.

### **General Comments**

1. Project Description: The PEIR should include a thorough and complete Project Description in order to facilitate meaningful environmental review of potential impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives. The Project Description should be as precise as possible in describing the details of all allowable activities (e.g., types of equipment or methods that may be used, maximum area of impact or volume of sediment removed or disturbed, seasonal work windows, locations for material disposal, etc.), as well as the details of the timing and length of activities. Thorough descriptions will facilitate CSLC staff's determination of the extent and locations of its leasing jurisdiction, make for a more robust analysis of the work that may be performed, and minimize the potential for subsequent environmental analysis to be required for project activities involving river crossings.
2. Programmatic Document: Because the Project is being proposed as a "Programmatic" rather than a "Project-level" EIR, the CSLC expects the Project will be presented as a series of distinct but related sequential activities (i.e., construction of the Westlands Solar Park, construction of the Henrietta to Gates transmission corridor, etc). State CEQA Guidelines,<sup>1</sup> section 15168, subdivision (c)(5) states that a program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and

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<sup>1</sup> The State "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

comprehensively as possible. The PEIR should make an effort to distinguish what activities and their mitigation measures are being analyzed in sufficient detail to be covered under the PEIR without additional project specific environmental review, and what activities will trigger the need for additional environmental analysis (See State CEQA Guidelines, § 15168, subd.(c)).

3. Deferred Mitigation: In order to avoid the improper deferral of mitigation, mitigation measures should either be presented as specific, feasible, enforceable obligations, or should be presented as formulas containing "performance standards which would mitigate the significant effect of the project and which may be accomplished in more than one specified way" (State CEQA Guidelines, §15126.4, subd. (b)).

### Biological Resources

4. Sensitive Species: The Westlands Water District should conduct queries of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Special Status Species Database to identify any special-status plant or wildlife species that may occur in the Project area. However, these queries alone should not be used as a substitute for coordination with the CDFW and USFWS, as well as direct surveys or data collection. The Westlands Water District should also consult directly with CDFW, USFWS, and possibly the and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Service (NMFS or NOAA Fisheries) for information on species that may be present, their life histories, and possible mitigation for any significant impacts. The PEIR should use this information to analyze the potential for such species to occur in the Project area, particularly the riparian and freshwater areas of the San Joaquin River, the Kings River, and the Fresno Slough. If impacts to special-status species are found to be significant, the PEIR should identify adequate mitigation measures.
5. Invasive Species: One of the major stressors in California waterways is introduced species. Therefore, the PEIR should consider the Project's potential to encourage the establishment or proliferation of aquatic invasive species as well as invasive terrestrial plants. Some invasive riparian plants currently along the San Joaquin River include tree of heaven, arundo, edible Fig, himalayan blackberry, perennial pepperweed and yellow starthistle. The CDFW's Invasive Species Program could assist with analyzing the project's potential to spread invasive species as well as with the development of appropriate mitigation (information at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/invasives/>).

In addition, in light of the recent decline of native pelagic organisms and in order to protect at-risk fish species, the PEIR should examine if any elements of the Project (e.g., changes in bankside vegetative cover) would favor non-native fisheries within the San Joaquin River, Kings River, or Fresno Slough.

6. Construction Noise: The PEIR should also evaluate noise and vibration impacts on fish and birds from construction activities involved in the river crossings for the

transmission corridors. Mitigation measures could include species-specific work windows as defined by CDFW, USFWS, and NMFS. Again, staff recommends early consultation with these agencies to minimize the impacts of the Project on sensitive species.

#### Climate Change

7. Greenhouse Gases: A greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions analysis consistent with the California Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) and required by the State CEQA Guidelines should be included in the PEIR. This analysis should identify a threshold for significance for GHG emissions, calculate the level of GHGs that will be emitted as a result of construction and ultimate build-out of the Project, determine the significance of the impacts of those emissions, and, if impacts are significant, identify mitigation measures that would reduce them to less than significant.

#### Cultural Resources

8. Submerged Resources: The PEIR should evaluate potential impacts to submerged cultural resources near the transmission corridor river crossings. The CSLC maintains a shipwrecks database that can assist with this analysis. CSLC staff requests that the Westlands Water District contact Senior Staff Counsel Pam Griggs at the contact information noted at the end of this letter to obtain shipwrecks data from the database and CSLC records for the Project site. The database includes known and potential vessels located on the State's tide and submerged lands; however, the locations of many shipwrecks remain unknown. Please note that any submerged archaeological site or submerged historic resource that has remained in State waters for more than 50 years is presumed to be significant.
9. Title to Resources: The PEIR should also mention that the title to all abandoned shipwrecks, archaeological sites, and historic or cultural resources on or in the tide and submerged lands of California is vested in the State and under the jurisdiction of the CSLC. CSLC staff requests that the Westlands Water District consult with Senior Staff Counsel Pam Griggs at the contact information noted at the end of this letter, should any cultural resources on state lands be discovered during construction of the proposed Project.

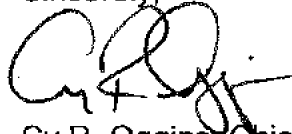
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NOP for the Project. As a responsible agency, the CSLC will need to rely on the Final PEIR or subsequent tiered document for the issuance of any new lease for transmission corridor crossings of sovereign land as specified above. Therefore, CSLC staff requests that you consider our comments prior to certification of the PEIR. Please send additional information on the Project to CSLC staff as plans become finalized.

Please send copies of future Project-related documents, including electronic copies of the Final PEIR, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), Notice of Determination (NOD), CEQA Findings and, if applicable, Statement of Overriding



Considerations when they become available, and refer questions concerning environmental review to Holly Wyer, Environmental Scientist, at (916) 574-2399 or via e-mail at [holly.wyer@slc.ca.gov](mailto:holly.wyer@slc.ca.gov). For questions concerning archaeological or historic resources under CSLC jurisdiction, please contact Senior Staff Counsel Pam Griggs at (916) 574-1854 or via email at [Pamela.Griggs@slc.ca.gov](mailto:Pamela.Griggs@slc.ca.gov). For questions concerning CSLC leasing jurisdiction, please contact Randy Collins, Public Land Management Specialist, at (916) 574-0900, or via email at [randy.collins@slc.ca.gov](mailto:randy.collins@slc.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Cy R. Oggins, Chief  
Division of Environmental Planning  
and Management

cc: Office of Planning and Research  
Randy Collins, LMD, CSLC  
Holly Wyer, DEPM, CSLC  
Shellie Haaf, Legal, CSLC

**NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION**

915 CAPITOL MALL, ROOM 364  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
(916) 653-6251  
(916) 657-5390 - FAX

March 29, 2013

Ms. Kiti Buelna

**Westlands Water District**

3130 North Fresno Street; P.O. Box 6056  
Fresno, CA 93703

RE: SCH# 2013031043 CEQA Notice of Preparation (NOP); draft  
Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) – **“Westlands Solar Park Master  
Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities Project;”** located in  
southwestern Fresno County and western Kings County, California

Dear Ms. Buelna:

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) has reviewed the CEQA Notice regarding the above referenced project. In the 1985 Appellate Court decision (170 Cal App 3<sup>rd</sup> 604), the court held that the NAHC has jurisdiction and special expertise, as a state agency, over affected Native American resources impacted by proposed projects, including archaeological places of religious significance to Native Americans, and to Native American burial sites.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) states that any project that causes a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resources, which includes archeological resources, is a significant effect requiring the preparation of an EIR (CEQA guidelines 15064(b)). To adequately comply with this provision and mitigate project-related impacts on archaeological resources, the Commission recommends the following actions be required:

Contact the appropriate Information Center for a record search to determine :If a part or all of the area of project effect (APE) has been previously surveyed for cultural resources, which we know that it has. The NAHC recommends that known cultural resources recorded on or adjacent to the APE be listed in the draft Environmental Impact Report.

If an additional archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey. We suggest that this be coordinated with the NAHC, if possible. The final report containing site forms, site significance, and mitigation measurers should be submitted immediately to the planning department. All information regarding site locations, Native American human remains, and associated funerary objects should be in a separate confidential addendum, and not be made available for pubic disclosure pursuant to California Government Code Section 6254.10. Contact has been made to the Native American Heritage Commission for :a Sacred Lands File Check. A list of appropriate Native American Contacts for consultation

concerning the project site has been provided and is attached to this letter to determine if the proposed active might impinge on any cultural resources. Lack of surface evidence of archeological resources does not preclude their subsurface existence.

Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of accidentally discovered archeological resources, per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) §15064.5(f). In areas of identified archaeological sensitivity, a certified archaeologist and a culturally affiliated Native American, with knowledge in cultural resources, should monitor all ground-disturbing activities. Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the disposition of recovered artifacts, in consultation with culturally affiliated Native Americans. Lead agencies should include provisions for discovery of Native American human remains in their mitigation plan. Health and Safety Code §7050.5, CEQA §15064.5(e), and Public Resources Code §5097.98 mandates the process to be followed in the event of an accidental discovery of any human remains in a location other than a dedicated cemetery.

Sincerely,

  
Dave Singleton  
Program Analyst  
(916) 653-6251

CC: State Clearinghouse

Attachment: Native American Contacts list

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**Native American Contacts  
Fresno and Kings Counties  
March 29, 2013**

Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians  
Elizabeth Hutchins Kipp, Chairperson  
P.O. Box 337 / 37302 Western Mono  
Auberry , CA 93602  
ck@bigsandyrancheria.com  
(559) 855-4003  
(559) 855-4129 Fax

Table Mountain Rancheria  
Bob Pennell, Cultural Resources Director  
P.O. Box 410 Yokuts  
Friant , CA 93626-0177  
(559) 325-0351  
(559) 217-9718 - cell  
(559) 325-0394 FAX

Cold Springs Rancheria of Mono Indians  
Robert Marquez, Chairperson  
P.O. Box 209 Mono  
Tollhouse , CA 93667  
(559) 855-5043  
559-855-4445 - FAX

Kings River Choinumni Farm Tribe  
John Davis, Chairman  
1064 Oxford Avenue Foothill Yokuts  
Clovis , CA 93612-2211 Choinumni  
(559) 307-6430

Santa Rosa Rancheria  
Rueben Barrios Sr., Chairperson  
P.O. Box 8 Tache  
Lemoore , CA 93245 Tachi  
(559) 924-1278 Yokut  
(559) 924-3583 Fax

Dunlap Band of Mono Historical Preservation Soc  
Mandy Marine, Board Chairperson  
P.O. Box 18 Mono  
Dunlap , CA 93621  
mandy\_marine@hotmail.  
com  
559-274-1705

Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal Goverment  
Robert Ledger SR., Tribal Chairperson  
2216 East Hammond Street Dumna/Foothill  
Fresno , CA 93702 Mono  
ledgerrobert@ymail.com  
559-519-1742 - office

Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band  
Kenneth Woodrow, Chairperson  
1179 Rock Haven Ct. Foothill Yokuts  
Salinas , CA 93906 Mono  
kwood8934@aol.com Wuksache  
831-443-9702

**This list is current only as of the date of this document.**

**Distribution of this list does not relieve any person of the statutory responsibility as defined in Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code, Section 5097.94 of the Public Resources Code and Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code.**

**This list is only applicable for contacting local Native Americans with regard to cultural resources for the proposed Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities Project; located near Kettleman City in southwestern Fresno County and western Kings County, California.**

**Native American Contacts  
Fresno and Kings Counties  
March 29, 2013**

Santa Rosa Tachi Rancheria  
Lalo Franco, Cultural Coordinator  
P.O. Box 8 Tachi  
Lemoore , CA 93245 Tache  
(559) 924-1278 - Ext. 5 Yokut  
(559) 924-3583 - FAX

Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal Government  
Eric Smith, Cultural Resource Manager  
2216 East Hammond Street Dumna/Foothill  
Fresno , CA 93602 Mono  
nuem2007@yahoo.com  
559-519-1742 - office

Dumna Wo-Wah Tribal Government  
John Ledger, Assistant Cultural Resource Manager  
2216 East Hammond Street Dumna/Foothill  
Fresno , CA 93602 Mono  
ledger17bonnie@yahoo.com  
559-519-1742 - office

**This list is current only as of the date of this document.**

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**This list is only applicable for contacting local Native Americans with regard to cultural resources for the proposed Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Planned Transmission Facilities Project; located near Kettleman City in southwestern Fresno County and western Kings County, California.**



APR 08 2013

Kiti Buelna  
Westlands Water District  
3130 N. Fresno Street  
Fresno, CA 93703

**Project: Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities**

**District CEQA Reference No: 20130280**

Dear Ms. Buelna:

The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (District) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Westlands Solar Park Master Plan and Related Transmission Facilities. The proposed project consists of a 2,400 MW solar facility on 24,000 acres with the following three transmission corridors: Henrietta-Gates Transmission Upgrades, Westlands Transmission Corridor, and the Helm to Gregg Transmission Corridor. The District offers the following comments:

**Emissions Analysis**

- 1) The District is currently designated as extreme nonattainment for the 8-hour ozone standard, attainment for PM10 and CO, and nonattainment for PM2.5 for the federal air quality standards. At the state level, the District is designated as nonattainment for the 8-hour ozone, PM10, and PM2.5 air quality standards. The District recommends that the Air Quality section of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) include a discussion of the following impacts:
  - a) **Criteria Pollutants:** Project related criteria pollutant emissions should be identified and quantified. The discussion should include existing and post-project emissions.
  - i) **Construction Emissions:** As stated in the NOP, construction emissions are short-term emissions and should be evaluated separate from operational emissions. Construction activities include, but are not limited to, on-site land preparation operations such as trenching, grading, soil import/export, paving, utilities installation, building construction, and architectural coatings; the

**Seyed Sadredin**  
Executive Director/Air Pollution Control Officer

Northern Region  
4800 Enterprise Way  
Modesto, CA 95356-8718  
Tel: (209) 557-6400 FAX: (209) 557-6475

Central Region (Main Office)  
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93726-0244  
Tel: (559) 230-6000 FAX: (559) 230-6061

Southern Region  
34946 Flyover Court  
Bakersfield, CA 93308-9725  
Tel: 661-392-5500 FAX: 661-392-5585

transport of materials to construction site (on-road heavy duty trucks, etc.); and off-site activities such as installation of new power lines. Equipment exhaust, as well as fugitive dust emissions should be quantified.

The District recommends preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) if annual construction emissions cannot be reduced or mitigated to below the following levels of significance: 10 tons per year of oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), 10 tons per year of reactive organic gases (ROG), or 15 tons per year particulate matter of 10 microns or less in size (PM<sub>10</sub>).

- *Recommended Mitigation:* To reduce impacts from construction related exhaust emissions, the District recommends feasible mitigation for the project to utilize off-road construction fleets that can achieve fleet average emissions equal to or cleaner than the Tier II emission standards, as set forth in §2423 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, and Part 89 of Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations. This can be achieved through any combination of uncontrolled engines and engines complying with Tier II and above engine standards.
- ii) **Operational Emissions:** Operational emissions are considered long-term emissions. Permitted (stationary) sources, such as backup generators, and non-permitted (mobile) sources, such as employee trips and water trucks used for site maintenance, should be analyzed separately.

The District recommends preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) if the sum of annual permitted and non-permitted emissions cannot be reduced or mitigated to below the following levels of significance: 10 tons per year of oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), 10 tons per year of reactive organic gases (ROG), or 15 tons per year particulate matter of 10 microns or less in size (PM<sub>10</sub>).

- iii) **Recommended Model:** Project related criteria pollutant emissions should be identified and quantified. Emissions analysis should be performed using CalEEMod (**California Emission Estimator Model**), which uses the most recent approved version of relevant Air Resources Board (ARB) emissions models and emission factors. CalEEMod is available to the public and can be downloaded from the CalEEMod website at: [www.caleemod.com](http://www.caleemod.com).
- b) **Health Impacts:** Project related health impacts should be evaluated to determine if emissions of toxic air contaminants (TAC) will pose a significant health risk to nearby sensitive receptors. TACs are defined as air pollutants that which may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness, or which may pose a hazard to human health. The most common source of TACs can be attributed to diesel exhaust fumes that are emitted from both stationary and mobile sources. Health impacts may require a detailed health risk assessment (HRA).



Prior to conducting an HRA, an applicant may perform a prioritization on all sources of emissions to determine if it is necessary to conduct an HRA. A prioritization is a screening tool used to identify projects that may have significant health impacts. If the project has a prioritization score of 1.0 or more, the project has the potential to exceed the District's significance threshold for health impacts of 10 in a million and an HRA should be performed.

If an HRA is to be performed, it is recommended that the project proponent contact the District to review the proposed modeling approach. The project would be considered to have a significant health risk if the HRA demonstrates that project related health impacts would exceed the District's significance threshold of 10 in a million.

More information on TACs, prioritizations and HRAs can be obtained by:

- E-mailing inquiries to: [hramodeler@valleyair.org](mailto:hramodeler@valleyair.org); or
- Visiting the District's website at:  
[http://www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/Tox\\_Resources/AirQualityMonitoring.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/busind/pto/Tox_Resources/AirQualityMonitoring.htm).

- 2) In addition to the discussions on potential impacts identified above, the District recommends the EIR also include the following discussions:
- a) A discussion of the methodology, model assumptions, inputs and results used in characterizing the project's impact on air quality. To comply with CEQA requirements for full disclosure, the District recommends that the modeling outputs be provided as appendices to the EIR. The District further recommends that the District be provided with an electronic copy of all input and output files for all modeling.
  - b) A discussion of the components and phases of the project and the associated emission projections, including ongoing emissions from each previous phase.
  - c) A discussion of project design elements and mitigation measures, including characterization of the effectiveness of each mitigation measure incorporated into the project.
  - d) A discussion of whether the project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant or precursor for which the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin is in non-attainment. More information on the District's attainment status can be found online by visiting the District's website at: <http://valleyair.org/aqinfo/attainment.htm>.

### **District Rules and Regulations**

- 3) Based on information provided, the proposed project would equal or exceed the relevant District Rule 9510 (Indirect Source Review) applicability threshold of 9,000



square feet. Therefore, the District concludes that the proposed project is subject to District Rule 9510.

Any applicant subject to District Rule 9510 is required to submit an Air Impact Assessment (AIA) application to the District no later than applying for final discretionary approval, and to pay any applicable off-site mitigation fees before issuance of the first building permit. If approval of the subject project constitutes the last discretionary approval by your agency, the District recommends that demonstration of compliance with District Rule 9510, including payment of all applicable fees before issuance of the first building permit, be made a condition of project approval. Information about how to comply with District Rule 9510 can be found online at:

<http://www.valleyair.org/ISR/ISRHome.htm>.

- 4) The proposed project may be subject to District rules and regulations, including: Regulation VIII (Fugitive PM10 Prohibitions), Rule 4102 (Nuisance), and Rule 4641 (Cutback, Slow Cure, and Emulsified Asphalt, Paving and Maintenance Operations). In the event an existing building will be renovated, partially demolished or removed, the project may be subject to District Rule 4002 (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants).
- 5) The above list of rules is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. To identify other District rules or regulations that apply to this project or to obtain information about District permit requirements, the applicant is strongly encouraged to contact the District's Small Business Assistance (SBA) Office at (559) 230-5888. Current District rules can be found online at the District's website at:

[www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm).

The District recommends that a copy of the District's comments be provided to the project proponent. If you have any questions or require further information, please call Angel Lor at (559) 230-5808.

Sincerely,

David Warner  
Director of Permit Services



for- Arnaud Marjollet  
Permit Services Manager

DW:al

cc: File